

punk planet

ISSUE #60 | MARCH AND APRIL 2004 | \$4.95 US
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notes from underground

FOUND MAGAZINE | EYE ON THE MUSIC IN BEIJING | CRAIG THOMPSON | THESE ARMS ARE SNAKES



THE FINAL COUNTDOWN

THE UNDERGROUND GEARS UP TO UNSEAT BUSH
YOUR GUIDEBOOK FOR A NEW TOMORROW! THE TIME IS NOW!





1. "Bleep...Bleep...Bloop"
Recorded at The Small
Church in Boston Ma.
By Mr. Micka and Mr.
Craggs



2. Self-titled,
debut full length cd
recorded in 1999, re-
released in 2000 by
Mr. Clagg

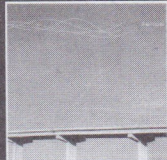


The Common Cold¹

"Bleep...Bleep...Bloop"² [Action Driver: No. 115]

The new full length recording "Bleep...Bleep...Bloop"²
is great and is now available for sale at stores everywhere.³
Seven songs of pensive instrumental music (post-rock,
math-rock⁴) similar to what you may have heard in
Chicago, Pittsburgh and/or San Francisco 1980-90.⁵

1. Are from Boston, Ma. The instruments: guitar, bass and drums.
2. Fans of "Yes" will be disappointed by the lack of mellotron.
3. a) www.actiondriver.com, b) www.yourcommoncold.com
c) www.lumberjack-online.com
4. Clever, witty and somewhat pretentious.
5. If you haven't heard of bands like A Minor Forest or
Don Cabellero you could be really excited.



1. ADIOS: The Ropes: Tribunal Records

Akron, Ohio based ADIOS impressed the hell out of us, they will certainly do the same to you. "The Ropes" is delightful jaunt into the indie rock genre. Jangling guitars and off rhythms all accentuated by softly sung vocals that will easily reel you in. For fans of Jimmy Eat World, Sunny Day Real Estate, Hey Mercedes and Further Seems Forever.



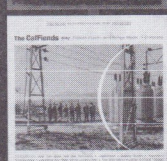
2. ONE SIX CONSPIRACY: Words Fill Time: Tribunal Records

"Words Fill Time" is a dynamic blend of youthful energy, unrelenting emotion and solid songwriting. Invigoratingly urgent, raw and wonderfully contagious: this is ONE SIX CONSPIRACY. For fans of Waxwing, Further Seems Forever, Juliana Theory and Jimmy Eat World



3. CASEY JONES: The Few, The Proud, The Crucial: Indianola Records

Jacksonville Florida has produced another winner and there is no surprise that the band features past and present members of celebrated locals Evergreen Terrace. On their debut full length "The Few, The Proud, The Crucial" Casey Jones takes everyone back to when straight edge hardcore was fast and fun with their own new school approach to the style. Recommended for fans of Minor Threat, Stretch Armstrong, Good Riddance, and Terror.



4. THE CAFFIENDS: Fission, Fusion, and Things Made of Concrete: Indianola Records

Pasadena California's post hardcore heroes Caffiends spent nearly 8 months in their home studio recording their sophomore full length follow up to the critically acclaimed "Closer to Defeat." The new record entitled "Fission, Fusion, and Things Made of Concrete" features 16 tracks of music ranging from blistering hardcore anthems to stripped down straight up rock and roll. The Caffiends have outdone themselves by creating a hardcore album by which all others will judged.



5. SEROTONIN: Future Anterior: Bifocal Media

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—DAJUIN YAO, SOUNDING BEIJING

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the risks

intro60

As I pen these words, it is an hour and a half before the Democratic caucus in Iowa begins. More than likely, by the time you read this a month from now, a Democratic presidential nominee will have emerged from the pack of eight currently playing the field. But it's important for you know that *right now*—the middle of January, 2004—who that person will be is wide open. Right now, the brisk air carries with it an unusual mix of hopeful change and bleak inevitability. Which way it will blow tomorrow is unknowable.

While the identity of his Democratic opponent is as yet unknown, President Bush's Teflon coating appears to have begun wearing off. Opinion polls place his approval rating at or near 50 percent. Experts and regular folk alike continue to question the circumstances that led us into Iraq. People are beginning to wonder why they still can't find work. Public outcry surrounding Bush's ludicrous space program announcement has been loud and sustained. Are new winds blowing? Only time will tell.

And it is precisely time that leads me—finally—to a discussion of the cover of our

60th issue: "The Final Countdown." The idea for a special section devoted to some of the people and organizations working towards unseating Bush came about from various discussions I've had over the last few months. Over and over again, people have mentioned how if we're serious about getting Bush out of office, the time to start planning and working to that end is *now*. Waiting until the fall will ultimately result in failure. And failure—at least for the many folks I've spoken with—is not an option this time around. Too much time has passed already. So to that end, we sat down with nine people and organizations who are doing something—something *now*—to get their ideas on where to go from here.

It goes without saying that this is not objective journalism—we have never made any proclamations of being "fair" or "balanced" when it comes to these things. It should come as no surprise that *Punk Planet* would want to see Bush out of office. However, "The Final Countdown" is *independent* journalism. The disparate subjects profiled in the section represent many different voices. Some agree with each other on principle; but disagree on

specifics. Others contradict each other on how to start, but run together near the finish. And where that finish line is located is up for debate among many as well. Suffice it to say, there's no party line being towed, other than the kegger we're *all* throwing to get Bush out and someone else in. If you're down, I think you'll be pleased with the way "The Final Countdown" turned out. I know I am.

As always, there's more than just the cover story in this issue of *Punk Planet*. In fact, there's an unusually diverse crop of people interviewed this time around. From a guy who makes a zine out of stuff he picks up off the ground to someone organizing the first experimental music festival in China and all points in between—it's definitely a something-for-everyone issue.

Anyway, there's plenty to read, so I'll stop here. See you next time for our 10 year anniversary issue,

DAN

Punk Rock Times

Your monthly source for new punk rock releases NO. 44 Dec. 2003

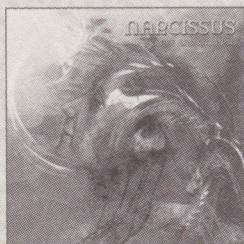


Why? Perhaps you will never know. Maybe the

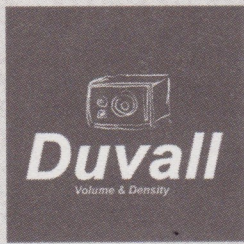
Today in Van Nuys, two men descend

midst

no one at the scene cared to comment perhaps fearing the consequences of



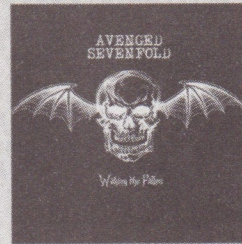
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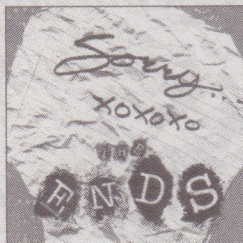
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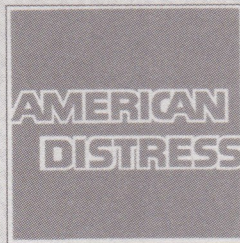
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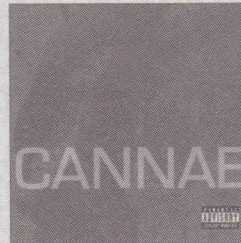
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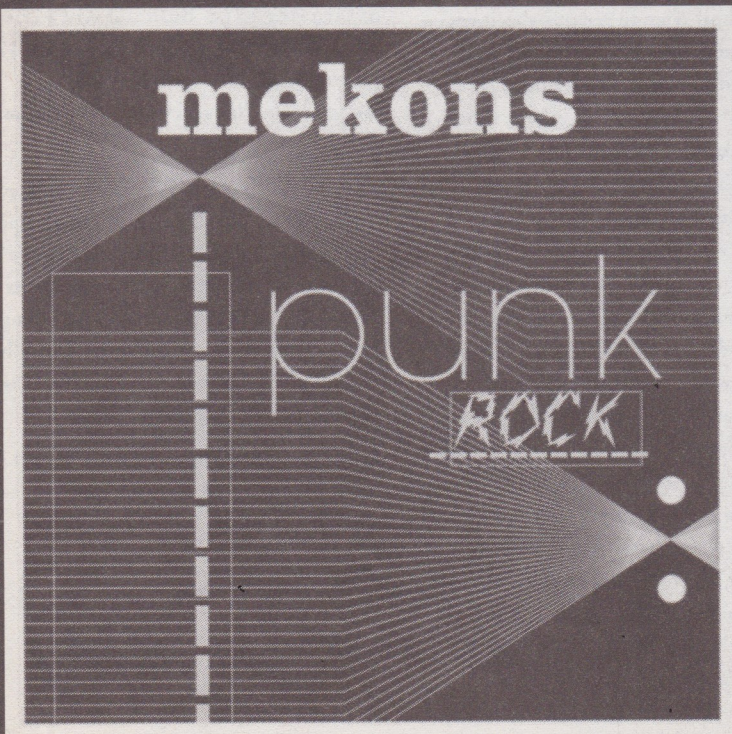
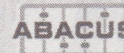
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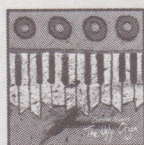


Azure Ray...have perfected the ethereal, lilting vocal style - their honeyed voices blend together perfectly, almost blurring into one silver thread. - Paste

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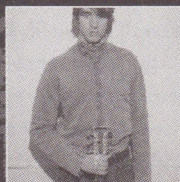
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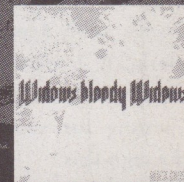


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Booting "Reboot."

► Dear Punk Planet,

As an outsider to the debate of digital music as *the* new music platform (I don't download songs out of inaccessibility to technology and an apathy towards the hype) I noticed a glaring perspective missing from the "talking about a platform revolution" article in PP #59. That perspective is from the "consumer" or music connoisseurs, who after all, are the ones being sued in this debate. For brevity's sake, I understand limiting the focus to label owners and organization representatives, but I would have liked to see the consumer's opinion and their concerns acknowledged more thoroughly.

Aside from that, my main concern was the finality of digital music as *the* new medium, as expressed by Ruth Schwartz of Mordam Records. Her perspective begins to outline a new non-retail environment where music is discovered, purchased, and consumed solely online and in the privacy of one's home. Is there even a possibility for digital music in retail stores? Possibly she wants digital music to be the new medium because she can benefit from a newly developed avenue in the free market? I don't want to make that assumption though. There is certainly an opening for smaller labels to capitalize through this.

What I worry about even more are the post-apocalyptic images (exaggerated, I

admit) I've imagined of future consumers spending their off (and on) work time downloading digital music without the experience of human contact—and contact with the actual product for that matter. I envision the opening scene of *28 Days Later* where the main character wanders empty city streets searching for human contact. I want to tell him, "No one is in the streets. They are all inside, downloading music."

It's not so much believing digital music to be the end of a culture rooted in human contact, but rather recognizing it as another techno tool to anchor individuals to their computers, which collectively smothers the aspects of living that make life rewarding

It's the trash heap of chat rooms, message boards, MakeoutClub, Suicide Girls, digital music, and similar substitutes for real-life experience that attempt to fill the spiritual void that we continue to search for as the exciting newness of techno-culture fades.

As a human that acts accordingly, I could never imagine the time spent downloading digital music replacing the experience I have physically searching out musical products. It's the chats with the store clerks; studying the graphic design of album packaging. It's sharing enthusiasm with other connoisseurs. The music almost becomes secondary to the experience.

It's for these reasons that I resent the finality of digital music as the new music platform for the industry expressed by Schwartz and I'm thrilled that Ian Mackaye was able to express his down to earth ratio-

nality on the subject. I hope others gain some support in his simplistic view.

In closing, I'll refrain from comparing the zombies in *28 Days Later* to those in zombie like states waiting for the download of the latest Bright Eyes release to complete. I can just hope this new musical supplement remains just that: a supplement to lived human experience, rather than a substitution. We vinyl, tape, and CD aficionados will be waiting in the record stores if you'd like to join us for conversation.

Scott Spitz

► Dear Punk Planet,

I'm writing with regards to the cover story in PP59, "Reboot!" I thought it was an interesting read, but maybe missed a couple of points.

Firstly, the article really could have done with a breakdown of how exactly the 99¢ charged per download by Apple's iTunes store is distributed out. At one point, Apple Senior Vice President Phil Schiller is quoted as saying, "The iTunes music store . . . doesn't make money." Fine, but doesn't make it for *who*? The artist? The label? Apple? With the elimination of the record store, who gets what from the 99¢ charge? How much does bandwidth costs eat into each download? Is it practical for an indie label to set up a similar service? And most crucially, how much of the 99¢ does the artist get?

Secondly, the sentence "For many, the cyberspace equivalent of Ian MacKaye's 'parallel track' is peer-to-peer file sharing," doesn't make sense to me. Personally, I think the equivalent is pay per download direct from the labels.

That's where you've maybe missed the boat, because as you probably know by now, Warp Records have made their entire archive downloadable, with a similar business model to iTunes, at warprecords.com/bleep.

Independent labels can and probably should license their artists to iTunes. But they should also include a line in the comment tag of each file letting users know that higher quality versions of the same tracks are available for download direct from the label's website for a cheaper price. Tracks on iTunes will effectively advertise the labels and their websites.

Anyway, I felt that as a counterbalance to the free advertising for Apple, and the digitized iPod on the cover, the article probably could have done with talking to Warp about the launch of Bleep (which appears to have been a resounding success). I know you're an American magazine, and everyone quoted in the article runs labels or distribution companies in America, but Bleep is obviously worldwide.

One more thought: "The fact that Apple have been able to plant this image of themselves as creative and rebellious free-thinkers in the minds of so many intelligent and media-hardened skeptics really gives one pause. It is testimony to the insidious power of expensive slick ad cam-

paings and, perhaps, to a certain amount of wishful thinking in the minds of people who fall for them" —Neil Stephenson.

Thanks for a great magazine,

Mark O'Gara
Paris, France.

► *A quick response from the editor:*

The iTunes 99¢ cut, as widely reported in the technology press, breaks down as follows: 29 cents goes to Apple and 70 cents is paid to record company. The company then pays the artist (one would assume they pay according to stipulations outlined in their pre-existing contract). The amount paid to artists has been reported to be somewhere between 10 and 15 cents for a song, though if those amounts apply to the traditionally better cuts independent artists get from their labels is the stuff of nondisclosure agreements. I'm as curious to know as you are, truth be told.

In regards to Warp's innovation of selling their own MP3s online, well, it's not all that innovative. There have been a number of attempts among independents over the years at selling MP3s online. None have been particularly successful. If Warp is pulling it off, bully for them. But to me, that's really an offshoot of mailorder and wholly different than a complete online store experience where someone can buy music from all sorts of bands and labels in one spot.

—Dan Sinker

Praising GI

► Dear Punk Planet—

Great article on GI! ["Government Reissued" PP58] I lived in DC from

'86-'90 and was a fan from the first time I heard them. Stabb & Co were amazing: while almost everyone else in town were doing endless benefits and carping about The Injustice Of Live, Government Issue produced obliquely personal, penetrating, and original records powered by one staggering Tom Lyle riff after another. I'm glad the band was in accord about *You* being the peak, because I'll still be spinning it when I'm 100 years old.

GI—along with countless other passionate and gripping bands like Naked Raygun, Mission of Burma, Moving Targets etc.—certainly *did* leave behind a legacy, one that I'm glad is still, perhaps, below most people's radar. If every little Gen X,Y,Z-per was pimping GI like the Clash and the Ramones, it'd be a sad state of affairs.

Of the handful of times I saw them live, their last show—at the 9:30 Club in DC—remains with me. On a stage strewn with rose petals, the guys got up and blazed an incandescent beacon in the night sky. Stabb shyly shook hands afterwards, but I had to hug the guy instead.

Praise the reissues—this band *killed*.

Dave Bottoms
Houston, TX

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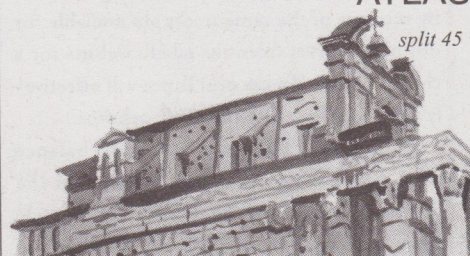
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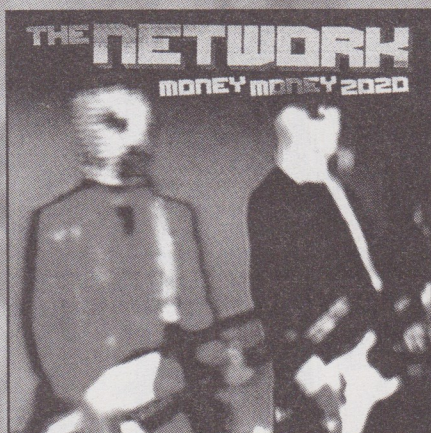


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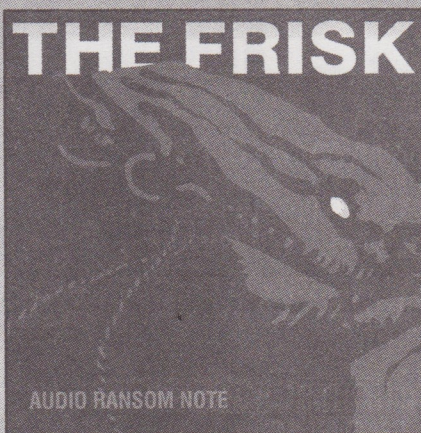
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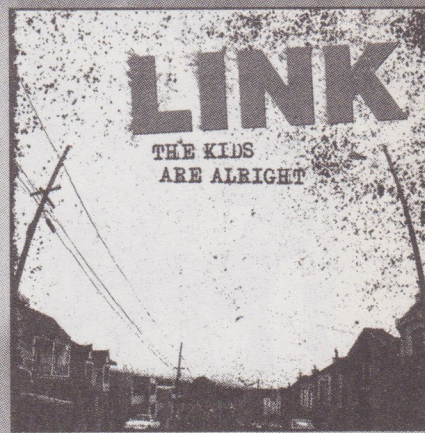
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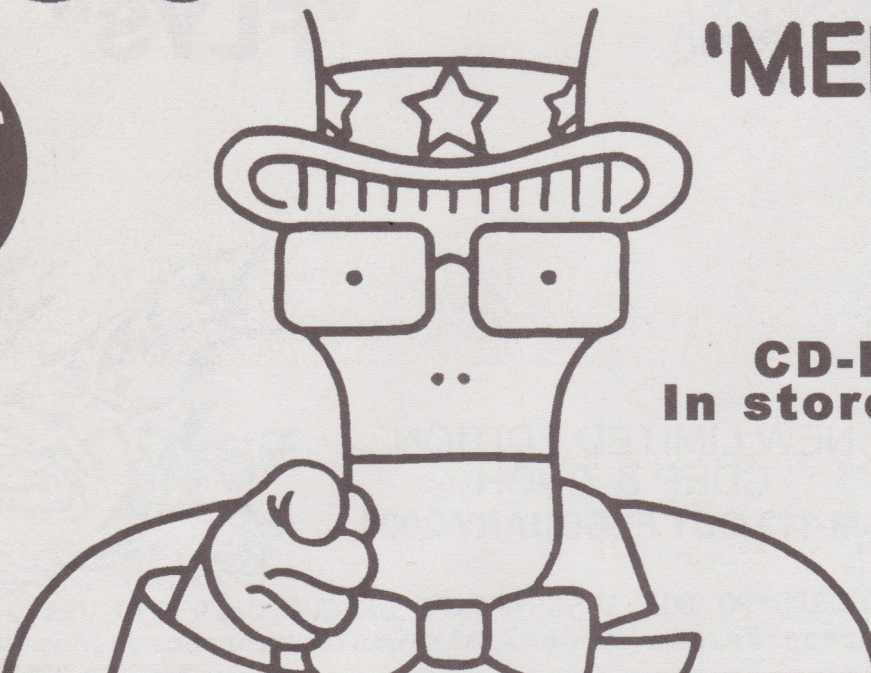
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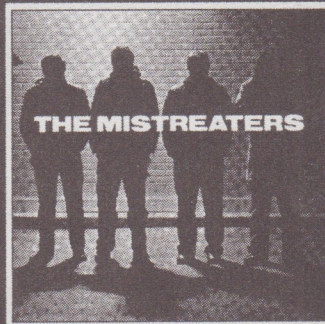
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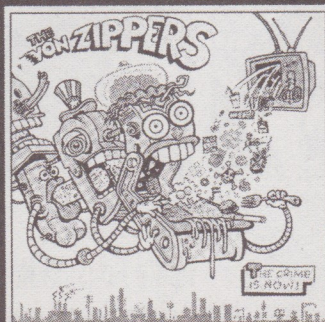
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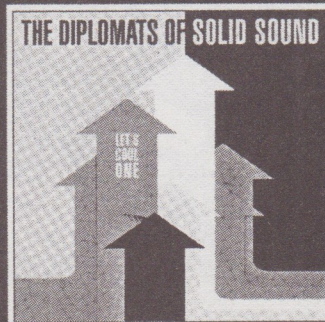
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SCANNING THE DIAL FOR LIFE ON THE MARGINS

“The shocks were fucking intense . . . I almost dropped the controller.”

LOS ANGELES TECH-ARTS COLLECTIVE C-LEVEL BRINGS THE PAIN WITH THEIR HYBRID VIDEO GAME ART PIECES.

Have you ever played Tekken? When you play, do you ever wish your opponent—whether he or she is your best friend, lover or grandmother—actually felt the wrath of your spinning demon uppercut? Or have you ever wish you could step inside David Koresh’s head during those hellish final moments inside the Branch Davidian Compound? Well, pinch yourself: your day has come thanks to C-level, an LA-based tech-arts collective that is merging video gaming and performance art. But don’t bust out that slide-rule just yet—this ain’t your daddy’s computer club.

C-level is made up of artists, writers, technologists, social theorists and friends. They have office space for

their members, workshops on Flash programming open to the public, and a meeting space for the Los Angeles Art and Technology Hackers Club. But most importantly—as far as this writer is concerned—they take video games and gamers off the ratty couch and thrust them into a public arena in order to examine the ways in which people behave in some very unconventional circumstances.

Tekken Torture is C-level’s most enduring project. Since its inception in May 2001, the Tekken Torture Tournament has become an international event. 2003’s first round took place across the US to lands as far away as Israel and Australia. The tournament lures its maimed, but undefeated par-

ticipants to the semifinals held in New York City (the finals followed in LA).

The idea of Tekken Torture is simple: two people combat one another in Tekken, the classic martial arts fighting game for PlayStation. The players are seated next to one another, backs to the crowd. Video of their face and arms are on monitors sitting next to a *huge* projection of the Tekken video screen. Boring, right? Wrong.

C-level’s twist is this: dual electrodes are wired across a player’s bicep and forearms. The electrodes are triggered by a successful attack, which causes a strong enough shock to prevent the player from fighting back—mirroring the way the on screen fighter is temporarily paralyzed.

In addition to inflicting pain on willing victims, C-level’s motive behind the game is to observe the response of the spectators.

“Watch anyone cheering for a sporting team, betting on a horse, or watching a

rock band—on an unconscious level, they move their bodies as if they could affect the outcome of the event,” explains Eddo Stern, C-level member, and one of the creators of Tekken Torture. “When playing video games, you are the spectator and the video game is the spectacle.”

C-level throws you into the mix, and sets the dial on puree: *you* are Mario. *You* are Luigi. *You* are Donkey Kong. C-level presents your humiliation on a public stage for the edification of a throng of blood-thirsty hipsters.

“With Tekken, we were really impressed and entertained by how the cartoon violence of the game, the public on-stage competition, and the shocks combined to drive people—both men and women—into a spectacle of aggression,” says C-level member and Tekken Torture co-created Mark Allen. “We’ve created an environment in which people can play at being these macho roles without it being too serious or



Science gone horribly awry for the good of mankind!

SPEAKING MENTALLY WITH THE THINKER FROM THE MINDS

In seventh grade, I was a sci-fi geek. I'd sit in the back row and draw blueprints for the gigantic robot-cities of the future, complete with alien brothels and starship landing pads. I was convinced that by the year 2000, malevolent robot overlords would have enslaved the human race after the nuclear fallout of World War III left us hideously disfigured, slug-like mutants. One thing I could never figure out in my plans was this: if the world exploded tomorrow, what would happen to music? How would the apocalypse forever change rock'n'roll?

The Minds, an electrifying, otherworldly punk band from Portland, Oregon has the answer to that question. This quintet creates a perfect sci-fi soundtrack to every pre-teen's futuristic rock fantasy. Using less-than-fantastical modes of 21st Century technology, I was able to speak with The Minds' frontman The Thinker. We discussed how The Minds create the music that will one day save humanity from intergalactic monotony.

creepy . . . We also loved how over-the-top people would be in acting out the drama."

Sacha Yanow, an employee at The Kitchen Art Gallery in New York, echoes that sentiment, "During Tekken Torture, people walked up to their seats with a certain bravado, but when they started to get shocked all that bravado disappeared. People would start grimacing or laughing."

So how much does it hurt? According to 14-year-old Bogyi Banovich, who played in the semifinals, "The shocks were fucking intense! At the beginning it was like someone was pinching you and it made your arm jump up and down. When I got to the semifinals, the pain was bad—I almost

dropped the controller."

After the success of Tekken Torture, the folks at C-level have created Endgames, which ditches the cartoonish violence of Tekken and moves on to real-life carnage. Endgames, is an ongoing multimedia project that deals with apocalyptic moments in global history. Their first installment, "Waco: Resurrection," which occupies several multimedia rooms, explores the complex implications of the Branch Davidian disaster.

In order to play, the participant adopts the mind and body of David Koresh by wearing a voice-activated, hard plastic mask modeled after the ill-fated cult-leader. The object of the game is to

defend the Branch Davidian compound against internal intrigue, skeptical civilians, Koresh rivals and the inevitable advance of government agents. Trapped in the "Koresh skin," players are inundated with a sound-stream of government "psy-ops," FBI negotiators, the relentless roar of battle, and the voice of God. Players wield a variety of weapons, recite messianic texts drawn from the book of Revelations, and manipulate the behavior of both followers and rivals by exuding a charismatic aura. The outcome, however, will always be the same: death.

Endgames was designed to transcend the typical video game disconnect. C-level wants players to experience the confu-

sion and chaos that took place in Waco without the influence of preconceived notions: Why were the agents attacking? Just what was going on?

According to Stern, C-level chose Waco because, "It stirs up strong emotions because of the inherent contradictions with regards to religion and violence. It isn't an event that can be classified within a simplistic left/right political framework. After all, Waco still lacks a resolution.

"The goal is a critical re-examination of these events using the computer game medium," Stern continues. "C-level members believe that games can provide a new and powerful lens through which one can gain a fresh perspective on historical and political issues."

Was this band assembled in a lab or formed from a radioactive accident?

The Minds were carefully constructed in a lab from the finest ingredients of nerds, losers, and slack-offs. The experiment was going fine until someone spit a goober into the test tube. We are the unfortunate result. Seriously though, we didn't want to sound too dark or pretentious, so we threw a power pop touch into the mix. We just want people to have fun.

That sense of fun seems so characteristic of pre-teen sci-fi fans. How do you maintain that sense of social gracelessness and hormonal entropy?

We're all pretty nerdy, so sci-fi themes definitely influence us. I maintain a steady diet of Godzilla and Planet of the Apes movies. We have a song called "The Brain that Wouldn't Die"—it's a tribute to the old horror movie. We just want people to have a good time. There are too many bands out there that are trying to be way too serious. When I sing, I think of everyone finding a place to belong no matter how isolated they feel. Life is short. It's time to live a little before we all cease to exist.

The title song of your new album, *Plastic Girls* veers into political territory. Why'd you go that route?

Plastic Girls is about the way in which people commodify the human body, by saying there is one ideal, one acceptable form. I just get so sick and tired of the messages that the media tries to shove

down our throats: "Women should act like *this*," and "Women should look like *that*." It's not just women either. The same goes for men. Every time you turn around, there is some ad or billboard with some stupid looking model exposing himself or herself to sell some kind of product. It's so sad that people buy into this. Some people waste so much time and energy stressing about being different from the models that they see and feeling trapped in their own real skin, that they miss out on all the things that their body is capable of feeling and doing. The song is all about how the plastic is a cold, monstrous, *ugly* lie.

If you could choose between being able to read people's minds and being able to move objects telepathically, which would it be?

If I had to choose, it would be the ability to move objects with my mind. I am really lazy so that would come in really handy. Loading into clubs would be a hell of a lot easier! I really don't want to read people's minds. I can pretty much tell what they are thinking by looking at the twisted expressions on their faces.

With your absolute cerebral power, if you could, please look into the future: what three predictions do you have for the coming year?

More shitty summer blockbuster movies, taxes, and the end of the world as we know it. —Joe Meno

The future is now at Dirtnap Records: www.dirtnaprecs.com

Using historical events as starting points, the collective builds on existing game models and expands their emotional repertoire. For once the violence is not imaginary and gratuitous—it is real and gruesome.

"Computer games directly involve the participants in ways that passive media, such as film or literature can't," says Stern. "Computer games are currently at a critical cultural moment in their evolution, where their potential as an art medium or a site in which self-awareness meets serious cultural critique has been hinted at but rarely realized."

—Joshua M Bernstein

C-Level is online at www.c-level.cc

"During the '60s, there was essentially one youth culture. Now, there are many different ones."

FILMMAKER JAY CRAVEN TALKS ABOUT THE CHANGING TIMES AND HIS FILM, *THE YEAR THAT TREMBLED*.

The *Year That Trembled* is filmmaker Jay Craven's coming-of-age story about three fresh-out-of-high-school kids, caught up in the events surrounding the chaos of the Kent State shooting on May 4, 1970. Confronted by the hypocrisy of the Vietnam war and the complexities of the counter-culture, no one in the film emerges unscathed.

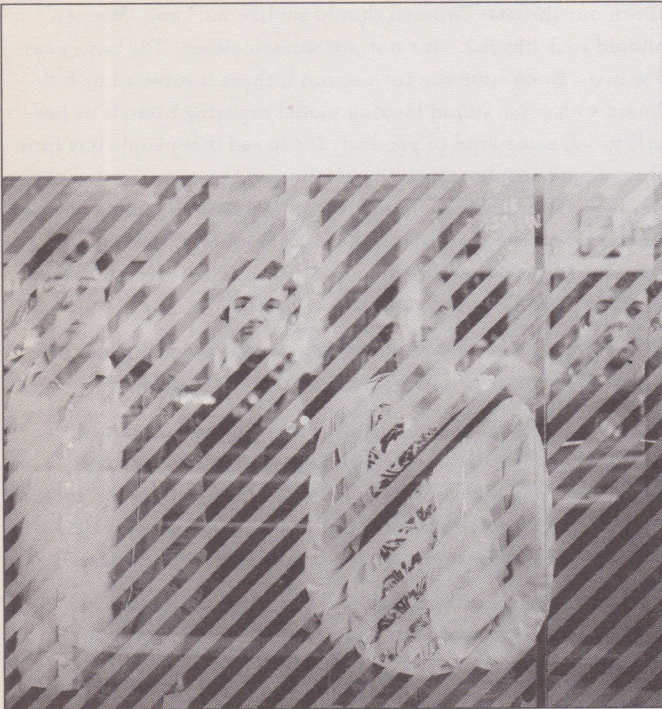
In the 1970s, Craven was a student activist at Boston

University when the US invaded Cambodia which spurred a rash of student protests on campuses across the country. He became an outspoken activist against the war. Craven, now 53, lives in Vermont and teaches film at Marlboro College.

Do your audiences see the parallels between the Kent State/Vietnam war era and what's happening today?

People clearly see it as a lesson. Although the situations are also distinct, there are many parallels. There is the notion of a protest culture that is emerging again. The idea of surveillance and limitations on civil liberties; the notion of the war itself and do you go or do you not go; do you support it or not support it. Although the draft has been abolished, it's reemerged in a new way, in the form of National Guard and Reserve troops. This has the same effect on people and their families. They're uprooted from their normal lives and sent abroad.

Do you see a real youth culture of protest developing now like it did during Vietnam?



"We're trying to do something we hope is unique."

BREAKING THE MOLD WITH SAN FRANCISCO'S UNCLASSIFIABLE TUSSLE

In this day and age of bands connecting influences like Lego bricks, it seems like common sense to synthesize the classic roots-dub of King Tubby with the no-wave funk of ESG and the proto-post rock of Neu. After all, there certainly are many dorm-room record collections out there that feature the work of all three of these artists. But try and locate artists who channel all these influences and come up with something that actually transcends them and you're going to have some difficulty. So we're going to make this easy on you: check out San Francisco's Tussle.

"We're doing what comes natural to us," says percussionist and melodica player Alexis Georgopolis. "We're trying to do something that we hope is unique."

Just listen to the two EPs they recorded on Troubleman Unlimited: *Eye Contact* and *Don't Stop*. The proof is in the pud-

During the '60s, there was essentially one youth culture. Now, there are many different ones, and there doesn't seem to be much to bring them together. There was a lot of cultural reinforcement for protest culture then because it became a mainstream culture. Now youth culture is very segmented. Protest culture is not a mainstream culture even though half a million people mobilized before the invasion of Iraq in New York City. But the notion of mass mobilization has been reintroduced—and much faster—because of the Internet. MoveOn.org has played a role that 30 years ago required months of preparation and organization. The way music was the reinforcing culture of that era, now there is a reinforcing culture of the Internet.

A major focus of your film

seems to be the struggle to balance personal relationships and goals with the demands of the movement.

Certainly during that time those were major issues. I left college to participate in protests. I lost a relationship with my college sweetheart as a result of that. I turned away from planning a career as a lawyer or politician and toward protest and the arts and community activism. I sometimes ask before a crowd, "How many of you made a significant life choice based on the war and the protest culture?" In some places, three quarters of the people raise their hands.

Do you think the people who made those choices feel good about them?

I think in some cases they do. In some cases it just meant

they put a career on hold. Many turned away from the development of a professional career because mainstream culture seemed so antithetical to the values they developed during this period. Instead of going into advertising or law or accounting, they went into alternative schools or community healthcare networks or became artists. I've known people—like the character in the film, Helen—who were teachers who lost their jobs. Many people have lost their jobs in the last couple of years because they took a stand against the Bush Administration and the current situation.

What was your role in student activism?

I'd been elected president of the student body of a liberal arts college, which at the time

was something activists did. The invasion of Cambodia happened two days after I had taken on this role, so helping to organize and lead the student strike became a big deal. In December 1970 I was asked to be part of a delegation of student leaders to go to North and South Vietnam to meet with student leaders there to fashion what was called a "People's Peace Treaty," and I testified before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that spring about the war.

Overall, how do you feel about the anti-war movement of that era?

I felt the internal dynamics of the movement were problematic, particularly because of the celebrity status of movement leaders, especially the Chicago Seven. There was a movement for a stronger role

ding. Their rhythms are kinetic and propulsive. The drum and bass are as much solo instruments as they are anchors of the band's nursery-rhyme like harmonies.

It's not difficult to recognize their references to krautrock or drum and bass classics. But getting listeners to stop dropping historical references and develop a new vocabulary to describe Tussle's work can be a little daunting.

"I can understand why people would compare us to Liquid Liquid and ESG," says Georgopolis. "I don't mind the comparisons either. But I do think it's important to say we never ever talked about how we wanted it to sound."

That much is clear. For as many nods to their influences as Tussle make, their music is stamped by the sub-cultural currents of their time and origins. For more than a decade San Francisco has been the home of countless forward-thinking rock and electronica: Matmos, Kid606, the Numbers, and Tussle's eminent labelmates, Erase Errata. It's not surprising that these sounds fit seamlessly into the band's style.

"I feel stylistically on the periphery of a lot of things," says Georgopolis, acknowledging how truly difficult it is to pigeon-hole his band. "We play shows with Erase Errata, the Numbers, The Coachwhips. But we also open shows for laptop people like

T Raumschmiere."

Tussle's flexibility has opened a number of opportunities for them. Their forthcoming full-length was produced by Trans Am member Phil Manley at former Nation of Ulysees/current Fucking Champs member Tim Green's Louder studio. And 2004 will see the release of a third recording by the band, in this instance a 12" remix for Z Records, featuring a "reconstruction" of one of the Z label's artists. It's a busy year for a band that works hard to defy expectations. —Joel Schalit

For more information on Tussle, drop by the band's website www.tussle.org

to be played by women, which had mixed success at best. But overall I felt that the protest movement had made a big difference that was generally not acknowledged by people who were part of it, who came away feeling they had not made a difference when they had.

What do you see happening with Iraq?

Like Vietnam, I think it's a quagmire. Like in Vietnam, I don't see established politicians leading us out of it. Even Howard Dean, who opposed the war going in, is now talking about a long presence of troops. I guess protest and opposition will need to become a factor to force a resolution here that ends the occupation.

For more information on The Year That Trembled, visit www.tytt.com

"We hope everyone can understand and support publications aimed at tearing down this insane system."

THE 16-YEAR-OLD ANARCHO-PUNK COLLECTIVE SLINGSHOT KEEPS FIGHTING

In 1967 the first issue of the Black Panther newspaper went to press in a small storefront called the "Long Haul" on Shattuck Avenue in Berkeley, California. Nearly 20 years later, a group of young activists brought the Long Haul back to life when they formed the Slingshot Collective. Whether they're planning direct action, producing a 2004 "day-planner for anarchists," or publishing zines devoted to printing stories like "Reject the Iraq Quagmire" and "Femicide and Globalization in Juarez, Mexico," Slingshot

remembers the history that happened under their roof. It's a tough act to follow, so they stay pretty busy.

The collective took time out of their tight schedule to explain how they got to where they are now, and how good food is the glue that keeps them together.

How did the Slingshot Collective first get started? And perhaps more important, how have you lasted for over 15 years now?

The Slingshot Collective started in the spring of 1988 when we started publishing our

zine, *Slingshot*. At first, we published every week, photocopying 1,000 copies and giving them out for free around Berkeley. *Slingshot* was pure fuck-shit-up direct action. Each copy would start out with what happened the day or week before, and then call for even more militant actions in the coming days. ¶ There was no separation between our zine and our street level militant actions—each fed off the other. In the late '80s, there were a lot of black bloc militant tactics, squatting, and riots in Europe and around the USA: in NYC, there were the Thompsons Square riots; in Berkeley, there were a series of riots involving thousands of people. The commercial areas got trashed, looted and set ablaze—people threw rocks at the fire trucks that came to put it out and even turned over

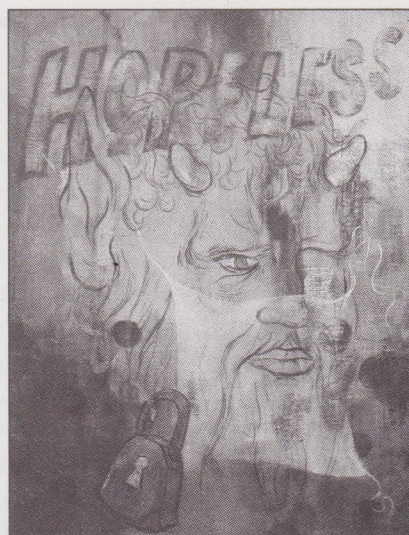
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Chicago artist Dan Grzeca's paintings are "equally inspired by carnival sideshow banner painters like Snap Wyatt and Fred G Johnson, heraldry, comics, and the improvisational energy of Free Jazz and punk rock," he says.

and burned the fire trucks themselves. ¶ Our most popular issue was a "special riot issue" after the May 19, 1989 riot in Berkeley, but riots were a significant part of many of our editions. Homelessness and poverty were a big issue—there were a lot of militant homeless people we organized with. *Slingshot* tried to move political activism beyond single-issue liberal shit: We stood for tearing down the whole rotting system! ¶ The Collective has kept going for almost 16 years because we're fucking fanatics, and also because it needs to be done. We hope everyone can understand and support publications aimed at tearing down this insane system.

What's *Slingshot*'s political philosophy?

We have been very careful over the years to avoid having any official "*Slingshot* political philosophy." Each issue of *Slingshot* is published by whoever is in the collective at the moment, and that spontaneous grouping gets to decide what *Slingshot* means and what its politics might be at the time. I think most of us are anti-capitalists, and many of the people in the collective are anarchists. However, that doesn't mean we want to put the project into a box by claiming we're only this or that sort of collective. We try to organize ourselves in as non-hierarchical a fashion as possible, with no one in control, and with as little division of labor as possible. Everyone gets a chance to do everything, from writing, to editing, to design, to distribution.

What advice might you give to others interested in starting collectives of their own?

Go for it! ¶ There isn't anything special about the *Slingshot* Collective—we're just like you. We suggest you focus on doing *something* and try to minimize the amount of time you spend talking about it first—too much talk first will stop you from ever accomplishing anything. Once you go out and do something, you'll make mistakes and learn what you need to talk about. Often, people are so scared they'll do things wrong that they never take a chance and just try something. Or they wonder if it will make a difference. You can never be sure what you do will work, but you *can* be sure that if you don't do anything, it won't work. Try to believe in your-

selves and put love, excitement, fun, and freedom into every part of your project. One thing we especially suggest is eating tasty food at meetings—don't let it become like work, or everyone will quit. ¶ Everyone, everywhere can stand up and begin creating a new world in whatever big or little ways you can think of right around you. Every day you wake up in the morning, you are confronted by choices about how you're going to live that day. In most choices you can either go the normal, acceptable, mainstream way, or another way. The more often you live your life differently, the happier you might be and the harder it will be for the system to continue.

—Will Tupper

Slingshot is online: <http://slingshot.tao.ca>



WOULDN'T BE KING (GEORGE WASHINGTON) - 2003 16 x 14



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“Neither security walls nor checkpoints will stop those who feel that they have nothing left to lose.”

JEWISH AUTHOR WENDY PEARLMAN VENTURES INTO THE OCCUPIED TERRITORIES TO DOCUMENT THE VOICES OF “ORDINARY” PALESTINIANS

Despite the extensive coverage in the American news, the reports on the arduous development of a bloodless co-existence between Israel and Palestine have left out one essential detail: the voices of ordinary people in the region. The media presents a slew of negotiators, government representatives, and pundits but skips over those people whose daily lives are filled with the brutal angst of the Occupation era. In her book *Occupied Voices* (Thunder's Mouth

Press/Nation Books), Midwestern-raised Jewish writer Wendy Pearlman compiles interviews she conducted with a cross-section of Palestinians she met while living and studying in the Occupied Territories. It's a read that's both harrowing and enraging, but also burning with hope and determination.

What was your central purpose for doing *Occupied Voices*?

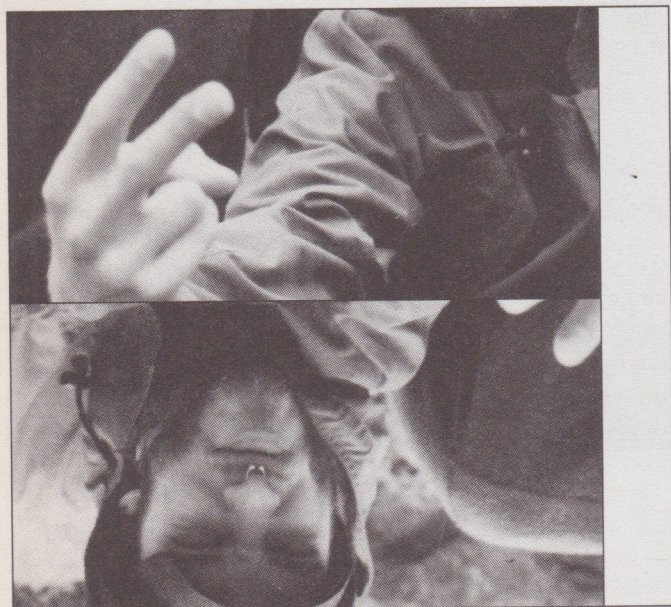
The goal was to bring Palestinian voices to audiences that have had little

opportunity to hear Palestinians speak for themselves. Every Palestinian man, woman and child has a story to tell about how his or her life has been affected by the Israeli occupation. This book presents some of the accounts that I encountered. While the particular stories vary, the core message remains the same: Palestinians have suffered enormously, and they'll continue to struggle until they fulfill their right to live with freedom and dignity on their own land. ¶ In putting together a collection of interviews with Palestinians, I'm not arguing that Palestinians' miseries trump those of Israelis, or that Israel doesn't have a right to defend itself. Rather, I hope readers of these interviews

will see why making Palestinians miserable is not a viable counterterrorism policy. Neither security walls nor checkpoints will stop those who feel that they have nothing left to lose.

The voices you covered are really distinct from each other. Other than being in the same oppressed situation, what would you say is a common thread between them?

One of the most common themes concerns how people struggle to maintain their dignity under dehumanizing conditions. The stories in the book show how the occupation robs Palestinians of control over their land, collective affairs, and even power to determine their own lives. All of the people with whom I spoke wanted to



"There was nothing missing for me in the punk scene, I just wanted to work on my own."

SPEAKING WITH MARCO HAAS, GERMAN ELECTRONIC MUSIC'S PUNKER HALF

Shitkatapult has a split personality. One half of the Berlin-based record label is Marco Haas, a punk at heart who performs destructive, greasy techno as T Raumschmiere—his name culled from a William S Burroughs story. The other is Sascha Ring, whose pensive solo project, Apparat—translated simply, "device"—combines warm instruments and gentle beats into something pretty.

I spoke to Marco about his work as T Raumschmiere, finding punk influences in electronics, and Shitkatapult by phone just as he was getting ready for a show in Berlin.

So even though you make such harsh electronic music now, you started in punk bands, right?

Yeah, that's where I started. Twelve years ago, I started as a drummer in a punk rock band

What made you go into electronic music?

live with freedom, to dream, and to provide for their families. They all could point out ways in which the denial of Palestinian national self-determination had impeded them from doing so. ¶ Each voice contributes something different. A psychologist talks about the emotional impact of occupation policies that make Palestinians feel like they have no control over their own lives; the mother of a 15 year-old shot by soldiers at a checkpoint mourns her son; an agricultural engineer talks about how Israel settlers consume four times as much water as Palestinians do; the director of a church school talks about the unity between Palestinian Christians and

Muslims in the struggle for statehood. Each person offers us a window into his or her own experiences under occupation. Together they give us a sense of the terrible tragedy and injustice of the situation as a whole.

Despite numerous glimmers of hope, most of the interviews are truly disheartening. How did this project not completely depress you?

This project doesn't depress me—the conflict does! The suffering of Palestinians and Israelis continues on a daily basis. Three and a half million Palestinians are living under occupation, many more millions are refugees prohibited from returning to their homeland, and five-

and-a-half million Israelis are living in fear. What depresses me isn't the book, but the reality that the book tries to capture. ¶ As a student of political science, I study the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in general, and the role of violence in the conflict in particular, in order to understand its causes and sustaining dynamics. But it affects me emotionally, as well. My American friends who've spent time in the Palestinian territories and I often joke that we were happier people before we went there. Once you've been touched by that suffering, it's impossible to forget. It is depressing, but I feel that I have a duty to do whatever I can to try to make the situa-

tion better.

How do you assess the situation as Sharon and Arafat fade into history? Do you find any hope in the Geneva Accord?

I try to find hope. There are many peace initiatives on the table now. Every week there seem to be more high-level Israeli figures—many of them respected leaders in the military and intelligence establishment—criticizing their country's security policy. In my opinion, however, the big question remains whether Israel plans to hold onto the West Bank and Gaza Strip or not. That issue must be faced squarely in order for there to be real change.

—Ron Nachmann ©

Hearing Voices is available from

I wanted to work on my own, basically, because I was sick of all the compromises. There was a point for me when it wasn't going forward that fast, and I thought I should do stuff on my own so that I could realize my vision of sound. When I started electronic music, I'd been going out to clubs for a year or two before that, checking out new music. After a year or two I got bored with that music, so I wanted to try to make it better.

Did you see something lacking in the punk scene?

No, there was nothing missing for me in the punk scene, I just wanted to work on my own.

Is your own music more evolved than what you were doing with your band, or just different?

At its root the music is the same—it's the machines and the instruments that are different. But when I make the music, I'm motivated by the same things. So in the end it doesn't matter if it's punk rock or electronic music.

What motivates you?

Pretty much everything. Frustration more than pleasure; anger more than happiness. I can focus all my energy on it, so I don't have to walk around and beat people up or something. I'm in a lucky position to focus that energy into my music. It's a self-curing process.

How does that energy work with running the label?

My music is my own personal thing, and the label works with other people's music. We try to give them a platform, and a voice, and a chance to release their shit. But I would never say that Shitkatapult and T Raumschmiere have the same things to say.

Why?

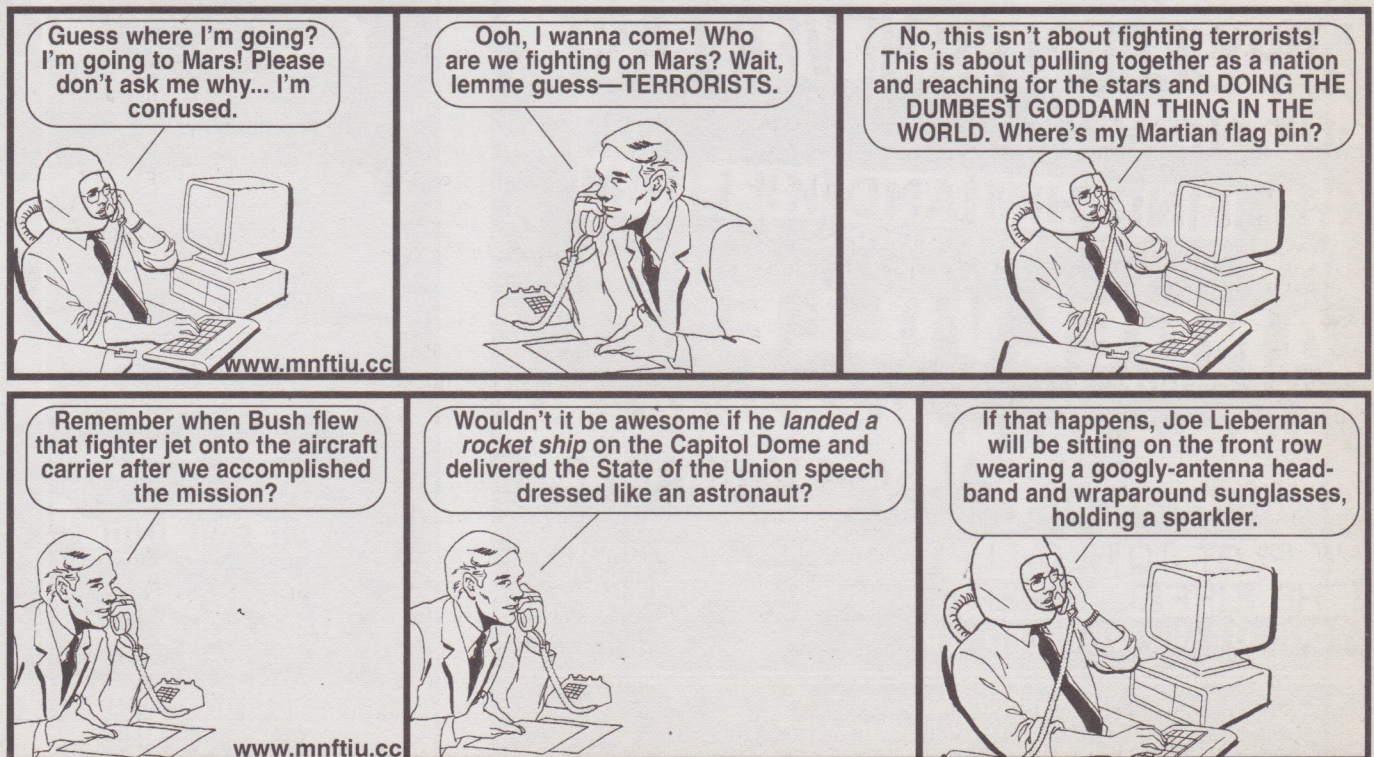
Well first, I run the label with Sascha Apparat. And also, Shitkatapult is such a collective of artists who all are very important in the whole process and the whole structure. It has nothing to do with my personal point of view.

The motto "stay anti" seems to follow you around. What does it mean?

It means a lot of things. Stay awake, be aware, criticize, keep your eyes open, always look at a story from both sides. It's more meant in a philosophical way, not in an aggressive, offensive way like go somewhere and smash a window. It has more to do with a person's state of mind, their behavior and their attitude. It has less to do with being anti-system in a specific way. It's not bogged down in definitions because I think we don't know the exact problems, there's still a lot to figure out. It's more against control. It means you shouldn't get too comfortable. —Katje Richstatter

Explore more of Marco's world online at www.shitkatapult.com

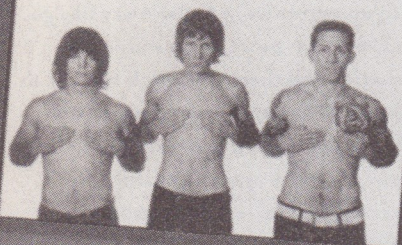
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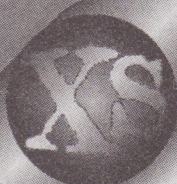


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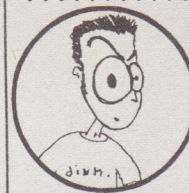
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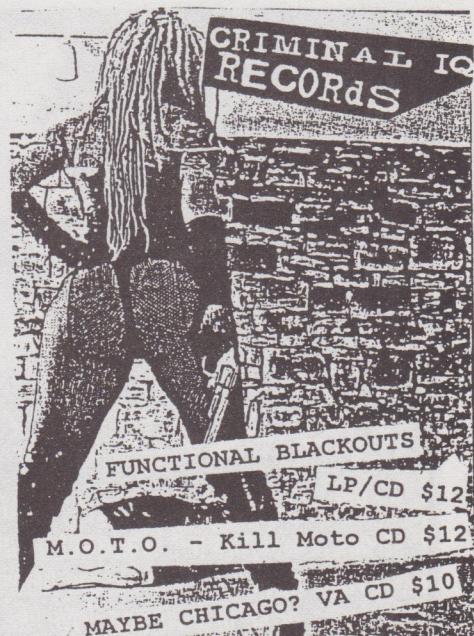
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For those of us who tend to lose, well, just about everything, the idea that they may end up published in a magazine is terrifying. But that's only one way look at it. Another way takes into consideration that editor Davy Rothbart managed to put *Found* together with an approach that is unmistakably compassion-

ate and sensitive. *Found* is like people-watching on paper. Each note, picture, grocery list, or journal entry is a little slice of a life that could belong to just about anyone. It shows that even during idle moments, or while completing even the most routine tasks, people experience intense, universal human emotions. It's a reminder that the world never stops spinning and that at even the seemingly mundane details offer a clue into the mystery of the human experience.

In addition to publishing *Found*, Rothbart is making a documentary, writing a book, and appears on the inimitable radio show *This American Life* from time to time. He also recently self-published a collection of short stories, *The Lone Surfer of Montana, Kansas*. We spoke recently about *Found* and why he simply can't mind his own business.

Interview by **Charles Spano**

Illustration by **Matt Duquette**

FOUND



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THOUGHT
BARE I
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YOUR Bred
STINKS

What do you
do?

FOUND

Mr. Hardbome,

hope you



Could you start by briefly describing what *Found* magazine is?

It is just a collection of stuff people have found: notes, letters, postcards, shopping lists, photographs, birthday cards, doodles—anything that gives a glimpse into someone else's life. It's stuff people find on the street, in the grass, in the alley, in the parking lot, in the prison yard, even in the ocean. Folks send this stuff in to us from all over the country and all over the world.

How did *Found* start out?

I've always loved finding stuff and wondering about other people's lives. As a kid I used to walk across this debris-filled baseball field to catch the bus to school and I remember picking up notes and pictures that were blowing around. I always felt as if I could connect with people just by reading the little half-page love note they'd left behind. So I've been collecting this kind of stuff all my life.

Is there something in your background that made you want to connect with people in this way?

My mom is completely deaf, and she is also a channeler, meditation teacher, and personal counselor. Before she had an operator-assisted telephone, I used to help her do counseling over the phone. I was six years old and folks would be sobbing to me—I mean really racked with sorrow—telling me everything that was troubling them, and I had to translate it all into sign language for my mom. Then she'd get on the phone and try and help them through their problems. As a result, I think I just grew up very attuned to what other people were thinking and feeling. ¶ I've always been curious to know what other people's experience of being human is like. And that's what these

found notes give us: a clear path right into folks' innermost fears and desires. ¶ A perfect example is actually the note that sparked the idea for *Found*. I came out of my friend's apartment in Chicago late one winter night and found a note on my windshield addressed to some guy named Mario. My name's Davy, but it had snowed a bit, and every car looks a little bit the same under a thin layer of snow. So I plucked up this note to Mario and read it: "Mario, I fucking hate you! You said you had to work, then why's your car HERE, at HER place?! You're a fucking LIAR! I hate you, I fucking hate you.—Amber. -PS Page me later" Page me later?! I couldn't believe it. It was such a beautiful note, full of all these simultaneous emotions: love, anger, hurt. The economy of language is incredible, you know? I mean, it's like 30 words long and yet I feel like I know Amber and I know so much about her and Mario's situation. She mistook my car for his, which is fucked up, but there must be a history of betrayal here or she wouldn't be so quick to jump to conclusions. ¶ Anyway, I loved this note and I found myself thinking about it all the time.

A couple of months later, I wound up crashing on the floor of a punk house in New Orleans that belonged to two kids named Jamie and Abram, who wrote this amazing book called *Tales of a Punk Rock Nothing*, and I've since become a huge fan of all the great publishing and activist work they do. I started talking with Jamie about writing and he started showing me a bunch of zines: *Cometbus*, *Burn Collector*, et cetera. I thought they were incredible! I'd seen zines before, but for some reason had never really dunked my head into them. I loved reading the stuff Jamie showed me, but I was especially struck by the fact that all these other random punk kids from all over the

country who happened to be crashing at Jamie's place the same weekend seemed to know all about the zines he was showing me. I realized that you could make your own book or zine and it might actually get out to lots and lots of people. ¶ So I was driving back up to Chicago a couple nights later—it was like four in the morning and everyone else in the car was asleep—and I kept turning these two things over in my head: the Mario and Amber note and all the zines Jamie had showed me. It was like in *Sesame Street* when they have a compound word like "firehose" and they have the two halves of the word inching closer and closer toward each other: "found stuff . . . independent magazines." "Found stuff . . . zines." "*Found* magazine!" I was so excited I woke my friend Rob up in the passenger seat. I was like, "Rob, dude, check it out! *Found* magazine! All found stuff, you know?" And he was like, "Davy, what the fuck, do you know what time it is? I'm sleeping!" But then in the morning when I told him about it he agreed that it was a pretty cool idea.

So then where did you go from there?

What I did next was make a bunch of flyers that explained what *Found* magazine was all about, asking for people to send me their finds. I put the "Page Me Later" note on there as an example. I passed the flyer out all over the place as I roamed around to different cities. I gave them to friends and strangers. I put them on cool-looking car windshields. I taped them up at food co-ops, pet stores, strip clubs, police stations—every place I could think of. At first I didn't hear anything, then stuff started coming in. My friends sent me some spectacular finds, but it was especially great to get finds from people I didn't even know. ¶ Finally, I spent three nights at the ticket



broker's office where I worked and slapped together the first issue of *Found* with scissors and tape. A couple of friends stopped in and helped put pages together. My cousin Josh was back in Chicago for the weekend and on the third night, he and his 14-year-old brother Gabe stayed up until 7 a.m. with me and helped finish putting it together. ¶ I was just going to make 50 copies but when we went over to Kinko's, Josh and the kid who worked at Kinko's looked at what we had and said, "Hey, this is pretty cool." They convinced me to print 800 instead of 50. My friend Rob made a silkscreen with the *Found* logo and together we printed 800 covers. ¶ Then I lured tons of folks over to my apartment with beer and pizza and we collated and stapled all of the magazines. We decorated the covers with found notes and photos. It was kind of a madhouse and a bunch of my personal stuff got mixed in with the *Found* stuff, so notes from my ex-girlfriends and pictures of a demolition derby I went to in Oklahoma ended up on some of the covers. ¶ A guy I'd met playing basketball named Jason Bitner said he would make a website for *Found*. At first, we just wanted to use it to give directions to our release party we were planning. The day after the party, I went down to Honduras for six weeks on a trip I had been planning long before *Found* became a reality. And while I was gone things got crazy. I just never understood the power of the Internet before this. Having a website made it possible for folks all over the world to check out the project. And people were super into it! By the time I got home, all 800 copies were sold, and there were messages on my voicemail from NPR and *Spin* magazine. I even had a message from a kid I'd met at camp when I was seven and hadn't talked to since. ¶ We printed

more magazines, and the project has just kept growing. It's so thrilling to me that so many people have gotten involved by sharing their finds and spreading word about what we're up to. It's truly stunning and overwhelming. I never meant to start a "real" magazine, I just loved found stuff and wanted to find a way to share all the neat stuff I'd found with everyone else.

Did you ever get something submitted to *Found* that you just couldn't print?

Oddly, we get a lot of pictures of people's vaginas and penises. I had no idea folks were taking that many snapshots of each other's crotches—and then *losing* them! They're kind of funny, but ultimately not that interesting. We haven't printed any, but my friend Mike Kozura is going to put together a magazine called *Dirty Found*. It'll have a bunch of those photos plus a bunch of weird erotic fiction or journals that folks have found and sent in, plus some other really sick shit that I can't even mention. Mike said he's going to print *Dirty Found* sealed in plastic and it's going to be such a hit he'll put *Found* out of business.

What do you think about the ethics of printing found stuff?

I have a lot of respect and love and affection for the people whose notes are found. The last thing I would want to do is mock people. The least interesting approach to it is to say, "Look at these stupid people." Yet, at the same time when I do live readings, they're really funny, and people are laughing. Occasionally I wonder if these people are laughing because they are laughing at the person, or are they just laughing at *life*? For me, when I'm laughing at the found notes, it's because I'm laughing at myself. I recognize myself in just about all the notes,

because there are universal emotions in all the notes, and maybe their way of expressing it is different than mine. For me, it's that flicker of recognition that brings me so much joy or makes me laugh. You don't know the person who wrote it, but you end up feeling more plugged into the world—more connected to everyone around you—because of it.

Do you ever hesitate when you're deciding to put something in or not?

Occasionally. Sometimes there's a photograph, and you have to ask yourself "If people look at that, they're just laughing at the person." That's the question I ask myself. I think some people tend to respond to the misspellings and the poor grammar in some pieces, but to me that's really not very interesting. I'm more interested in what the person who wrote it is trying to convey. Sometimes it's really heavy and really sad. The notes I do use have some sense of story to them. And I like ones that have simultaneous and conflicting emotions, because I think that's true to life. We're rarely feeling just one thing at a time, and I like when some of these notes express lots of stuff—heartbreak, outrage, and joy—all at the same time.

As you sift through all these notes, do you get a sense of what's going to trigger more than just a snicker?

I think people who assume it's exploitation think of the people who write the notes as so different than they are that they can't relate or understand it as anything other than exploitation. But I think that, in the end, everyone is trying to process a lot of the same stuff. People are people and we all have a whole lot in common. ©

m a g a z i n e
I NEVER MEANT TO START A "REAL"
MAGAZINE, I JUST LOVED FOUND
STUFF AND WANTED TO FIND A WAY
TO SHARE ALL THE NEAT STUFF I'D
FOUND WITH EVERYONE ELSE.

Manio,
I fucking hate you
you said you had to
work then whys
your car HERE
at HFD

When three out of four members of a band run onto the stage dressed as the world's biggest New Year's babies, they'd better play something that's going to knock your damn socks off. This is just what Haymarket Riot did when they pulled on disposable diapers to ring in 2004 at the Fireside Bowl. Keep in mind: this is Chicago, not California—it takes some tough skin to run around in your skivvies this time of year. So when you see that, in spite of the droopy drawers and an unfriendly draft, these guys play full-throttle, balls-out rock, you know that they've hit on something extraordinary.

Just about every critic who reviewed Haymarket's 2001 release, *Bloodshot Eyes*, spent at least half the review spewing a litany of genres, subgenres, predecessors, and influences in an effort to categorize their sound. According to Bassist Fred Popolo, those critics would "all have a much easier time with it if they just sat down and described what they hear."

Like all good bands, it's Haymarket's peculiar twist on their influences as shaped by the members' experiences and personalities that make their music refreshing. It's the way they fit oddly angular guitars—perfectly into what would otherwise be a smooth bass groove. It's not that it's never been done before—it has—but there's something about the way Haymarket attacks their intricate song structures with a naked aggression that makes their music indefinable. Each song is wrought contradictions—anger, humor, discord, tension, distraction, irony, and sudden bursts of focused harmony—that manage to work due to the confident arrangements and first-rate technique.

At this stage of the game Popolo knows he can trust his own judgment. He started his label, Divot Records, right after he graduated from high school. Now, at 30, he can recall

countless labels that flared up and fizzled out in the intervening years. Divot has maintained a slow but consistent growth. He and label partner/bandmate Kevin Frank have never been able to quit their day jobs—Popolo is a carpenter—but they never had that expectation. They're primarily interested in working with the smartest, most original new bands around.

I met Fred at a coffee shop in our neighborhood, and he told me why he likes having so much on his plate.

Interview by **Cate Levinson**

Photos by **Andrew Ballantyne**

When did you start playing music?

When I was young my mom signed me up for piano lessons and I hated it. I would go over to the teacher's apartment and I had to play all this boring music that I didn't want to listen to, much less play. I quit right away. I really put my foot down: "Mom, I'm never going back there!" I had a really hard time being forced to do anything. I hated school until I got to college, because that was my decision. I made the decision to go, and then decided what I studied. But I hated the whole piano thing. The thing is I loved the *idea* of piano lessons, but the reality of the lessons I was taking didn't appeal to me at all: I hated that my mom had to drive me, I didn't like the apartment, I didn't like the teacher. ¶ When I started to go and see all these punk bands play, it was just amazing to me. We had a guitar at home, and I started picking it up once in a while. One day I stumbled across a power chord for the first time, and I was like, "Wait a minute, that's the same chord those guys were playing the other night." Then I'd

find another one and another one, and I was hooked. Then I moved onto the bass and I love it, I really do. But I didn't really start playing music until I was 18 or 19. I think that's kind of late. I wish I had started earlier, but I didn't realize I could just do it. I didn't think I had what it takes.

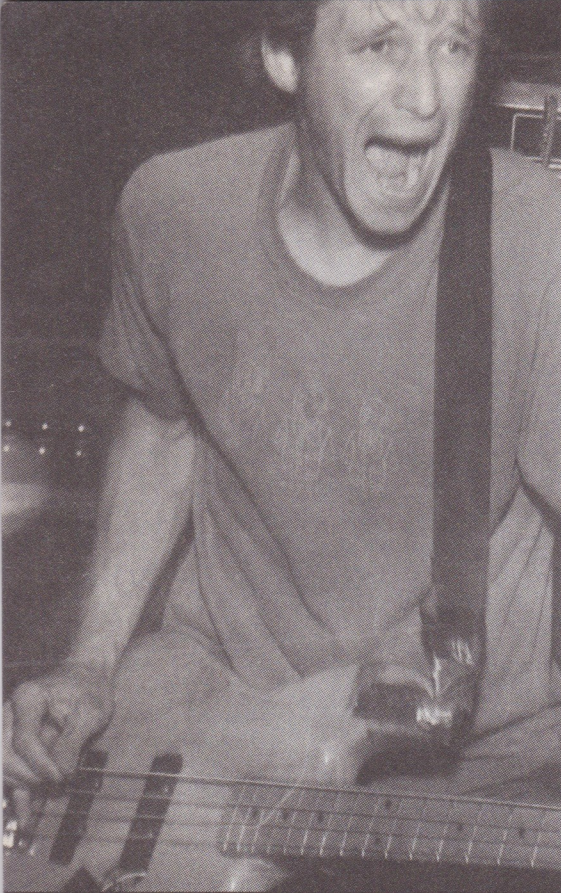
You didn't think you had what it takes to learn to play music?

Yeah, I just didn't know that all you have to do is start.

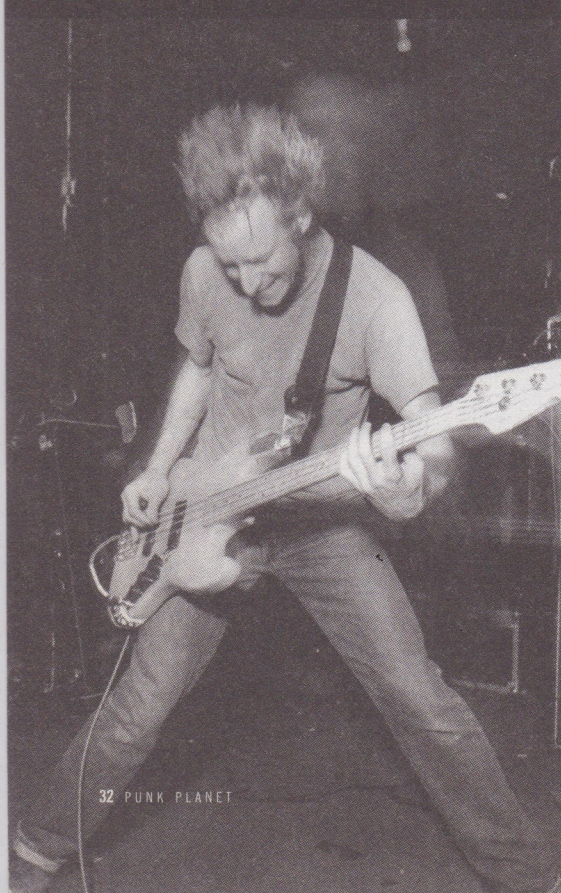
I always feel like that's this big secret they never tell you in school. Learning becomes this thing that you have to pay for because you'll never figure it out if you don't follow a specific procedure. And if you don't follow the rules, you'll never do it "right" and the results will be crap, and you will have wasted your time.

Yeah, getting out of that mindset is the hardest part. At some point, I was talking to the guys at work, and they asked me, "Who taught you how to play the bass?" and I told them, "No one did, the records taught me." That's really how I learned. I just started listening to them in a new way, listening to bass lines and trying to play them. I got them wrong, I got them wrong again, and I got them wrong *again*, but then I'd get them right, so I'd move on to the next thing. Piece by piece, I learned a lot. I think a lot of people who aren't involved in punk—and not just music: art, zines, what have you—they don't realize that there are all sorts of things that you can just *do*. I think a lot of people think they can't because they don't have people around them who tell them that they can do anything they want to do. Also, a lot of people think that they have to be good at some-





WHY PAY SOMEONE TO TEACH YOU? UNLESS YOU DO IT FOR YOURSELF, YOU'RE NEVER GOING TO MAKE IT YOUR OWN THING. YOU WANT TO BE ABLE TO JUDGE IT FOR YOURSELF, ACCORDING TO YOUR OWN DEFINITIONS.



thing in order to like it—not just good, but better than other people—otherwise they're wasting their time. Most of the guys that I work with don't do anything with their time other than work. I don't want to point out anyone, or judge anyone, but I just think it's sad. Some of them are these tough guys, and they're really good at what they do—they're good carpenters, they've got skills—but they don't do anything other than their job. Some of them are really heavy drinkers, and that's what they do with basically all their free time. So when that comes up, and people seem interested, I'll ask, "Well have you ever thought about picking up a guitar just to see how you like it?" Actually one guy that I work with on a crew did it, and he loves it. It's amazing, and for him the whole concept is new. I feel really fortunate that I learned that early on, and that it's the norm among all the people I'm close with.

That's probably the other essential element, I mean you didn't learn all this stuff in a vacuum, right? How has being in band shaped the way you play?

It's amazing: I get into a room with Kevin, Chris, and Shane and there's only *ucceeding*. We always try to think only in terms of what is possible; there's never a sense of "we really want to do this but can't, so forget it." We feed off each other. We have four very different, very strong personalities—that was true even in our old lineup—and the only way to deal with that is to bring everything to the table and say, "let's talk, let's try it, and let's work on it." It's not *my* band; it's *our* band. That's the only way I ever want to work. ¶ When I look back at bands that I played with in the past—Orwell, for example—we had all these problems with tuning and timing. We were *horrible*, but I wouldn't go back and change anything. That's where I learned a lot of what I know now. I

think that's such an amazing way to learn, it's so much fun. Why pay someone to teach you? Unless you do it for yourself, you're never going to make it your own thing. You want to be able to judge it for yourself, according to your own definitions.

You mentioned the changing lineup of Haymarket Riot. It's changed more than a couple of times. With such strong personalities coming in and out, what makes it the same band?

Well, for one thing, Chris and Shane are a couple of pretty unique personalities, but there's something about them that reminds me of Billy and Mike. They bring a lot to the table, writing-wise. The transition was easy because they have a lot of experience from bands they've played with in the past. Plus, they knew us when we had the old lineup—it wasn't as if they were flying blind. I feel really lucky. Shane is really easy to talk to, and as a bass player it's really important to be able to connect with our drummer. He makes me feel like I'm actually a decent bass player and he's the guy in charge when we play. I trust these guys completely.

Was that a problem before?

No, no, no I didn't mean it that way! It's just that "trust" is a really powerful word, and when you're working with people and writing with people you need to be able to communicate with them in a certain way. You need to be on the same page most of the time; you need to be able to understand how you work together best. The tricky part is that you need to be able to deal with the fact that you're going to be off sometimes. Music isn't an exact science—not this type of music, anyway. That's why I love it, that's what really turns me on about it. That's especially true when you're playing live. A really good example was the show we had the other night. We were a trainwreck. We were having a lot of fun, but we completely fucked up the end of a song. Kevin and Chris didn't want to leave it at that, so we backed it up and played the end again. We've never done that

in a show before—we've never even talked about what to do in that situation, but I was like, "I'm cool with that" and so was Shane and so was the crowd. I didn't mean to imply that the guys who were part of the old line up weren't trustworthy in any way, I'm just saying that this line up is working, and I think that's why.

That makes a lot of sense. You've got a lot riding on those friendships, so trust takes on a different meaning.

Oh yeah. When personalities clash it can be very difficult; it can get ugly. You never know what's on another guy's agenda. We're not totally immune to that, either. We're in our 30s at this point; we're not looking for stardom, we just want to be comfortable in the other aspects of our lives, so that we can still keep playing music. We all have other stuff going, a day job, a girlfriend, close friends, and of course Kevin and I run Divot Records, so we have a lot going on. I would probably feel differently if Haymarket were the only thing I did, but it's not.

When did you start Divot?

Back in '93.

So you were only about 18—why did you decide to start a label at that age?

I started going to shows early on in high school. My friend Craig was in Lustre King and he was tuned in to all the stuff that was going on in the western suburbs. Back then, all these bands were playing basements shows and putting together these punk spaces. My friend Jaime and I would go to a show and we'd talk to people about the bands, and we were so impressed: "What do you mean you *made* a record?!" I thought that was pretty amazing. ¶ At the time I knew this guy who was running a label called Rocco Records, I don't think they're around anymore, but he's the one who showed me the ropes. I told him that my friend Jaime and I wanted to put out a Guttersnipe record, and he was really helpful. He was like, "You want to put out a record? That's cool. Here's what you do:

these are the people you should talk to about this, and then you do this . . ." Soon after that, Guttersnipe went into the studio, and they made an amazing record. This story is similar to all the other stories I've read or heard about people who start labels this way—they are just so excited about the music that their friends are making. When I heard Guttersnipe, I was just stunned, I had never heard anything like it. It just blew me away. We all really wanted to press the record, so we pressed 500 copies. But we didn't know how distribution worked. We didn't know how we were supposed to send them out or anything. So we were standing around this pile of boxes going, "This is so cool, only we don't have 500 friends. What do we do now?" [laughs]

That could be a problem.

It was, but only for a little while. Around that time we all moved into the city, and there was a lot going on—lots of all ages shows—and there was this whole network of people who were interested in the kind of stuff we were doing. It got us moving. Once we really got some momentum going, we never decided to stop doing it.

So why do you keep on doing it? It's a pretty big commitment, but it's not something you can do full time—what keeps it going for you?

People say that a lot. [laughs] And what I always say about Divot is this: I am really fortunate to have this really big batch of friends who are really great people, and on top of that, they're really talented. All the people in all of the bands that I work with are dear friends of mine. We started out as friends and they're important to me, and their music is important to me. I really want their music to get out there and I want them to have the opportunity to play and make records. Obviously, it gets a lot more complicated when you get into the logistics of running a business—paying taxes is very *unamazing*—but the motivation is always the same. ¶ It was an exciting time back then. When I started Divot, it was really easy to

make the records. There were so many people with a wide array of talents who were willing to give us a chance or lend a hand, because we were all pretty set on the idea that we wanted to stay independent. Since we recognized that our goals were similar, we wanted to do what we could to help each other succeed.

How does your experience playing in bands over the years inform the way you run the label?

I think it helps. I've made enough mistakes over the years that I know a lot about what will work. For example, with marketing a band, new bands in particular make mistakes. They often spend too much on something that doesn't pay off. I try to help them make decisions that will help them stick around. I generally say that they should try to take it slow: Don't spend money you don't have. As a label, Kevin and I want Divot to be an outlet for bands who may not have another chance to reach an audience. It's really easy for me to talk to the bands that I work with, but I don't want to overstep my bounds. I do this because I really love everything that goes into a band: I love the music, the dynamic of the members, the people, the way they feel about what they're doing. Each one is unique. It blows my mind. That's why I keep doing this: it never gets old. Kevin and I don't have any strict guidelines for choosing a band, except you have to knock us *on our ass*. And I also have to like them as people. I really can't work with people that I don't like and respect. That's been one of the greatest benefits after all these years: I get to meet all these amazing people. I don't want to stop playing in the band and doing the label, because it puts me in this position where I get to meet people who are doing so many different things: musicians are the most obvious ones, but then I also meet photographers like Andrew Ballantyne and writers like you. We're all involved in this thing that we care about. We all have a lot of the same ideals. ☺

SOUND ING BEIJING 2003



Sun Dawei's digital hardcore opened the Sounding Beijing 2003. Photo by Li Yu

In the '90s, major music retailers packed their shelves to the brim so they'd have a seemingly endless supply of all the very latest must-have hits. The copies that didn't sell got shipped back to the distributor, who cut out the corners of their sleeves and sent them off to China to be recycled or destroyed. Most of the time, however, these "cutouts" were salvaged by Chinese street merchants and sold on the black market. These black market cutouts introduced the young people of China to the world beyond the country's borders.

Nowadays, with the introduction of affordable Internet connections and peer-to-peer file sharing, it has become nearly impossible for the Chinese government to enforce its restrictions on access to foreign culture and information. Now more than ever, new musical ideas are spreading through China like wildfire. Dajun Yao, a Taiwanese conceptual artist,

radio DJ and music producer, wants to fan those flames.

Last November Yao, who's now based in Berkeley, California, co-organized Sounding Beijing 2003, China's first experimental music festival. The three-day event commenced at The Loft, an upscale Beijing venue where 12 Chinese experimental artists and six international musicians performed to audiences nearing 200 people a night. Despite the bureaucratic obstacles laid before Yao and staff, their DIY ethic prevailed, and a second festival is now in the works.

Interview by **Cameron MacDonald**

What inspired you to create a festival of experimental music in Beijing?

I started it with friends in the avant-garde noise scene that I knew. I wanted to bring

them to China and let young Chinese people experience their music. Even though they could hear the music on CD, loud music must be heard live. ¶ I wanted to do it two years ago. Originally my friends in China were trying to raise a lot of money, but the people raising the funds failed again and again by going to all of these different sources—mainly big, international corporations like Intel China, Coca-Cola China, and other big names—which all said, "This type of music is *unhealthy* and *inappropriate* for China." ¶ In the end, I said, "This has to go on, no matter what." We paid for it ourselves. Nobody got any performing fees.

Did you encounter any political obstacles in organizing the festival?

We knew that the government did not support any new art, especially new music—it's



Chinese audience at The Loft. Photo by Kiya

just not on their agenda—we just hoped that they would not interfere with our activities. The Chinese law for performances is very strict. It has several pages that say you have to get approval from the Ministry of Culture by showing them documents about each artist and their performance, along with the titles of their pieces, their visas, blah, blah, blah. We knew that this would not work for our festival. People said, "If you can not do it this way, you can not hold your festival," but I didn't believe it. We went ahead without the approval of the Ministry of Culture, which was very dangerous because they had the right to stop us at any minute. The night before the festival, the Bureau of Culture sent some people over to tell us we had to cancel the event because we didn't have official

approval. However, the venue owner was very well-connected, so she made some calls and pacified the situation. We were able to have the festival.

I heard that over 200 people a night showed up at the festival.

Yes, which was pretty unusual for such an event—even in America, 300 people is a big turnout. They came from all over China, from the northeast like Harbin, to the very south like Guangzhou, and even Shanghai. Travel is very costly for these young students.

What were reactions to the performances like?

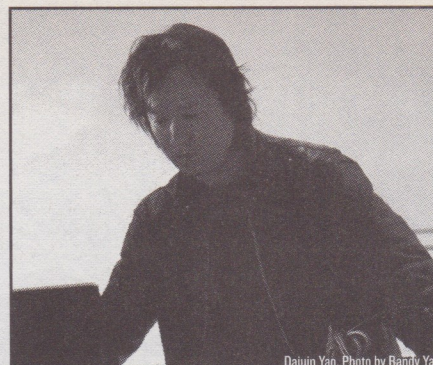
The reactions were polarized. There were some people who were really into it, who were of course thrilled. And then there were the onlookers who were just curious

about what the fuss was about. Of course, some of these people were disappointed because it wasn't what they expected. I heard one person say, "You call it, 'electronic music,' but there's no techno or beats!" [laughs] In general, I think that most of the people had a positive reaction to it.

Did you notice any distinctly Chinese qualities in the local performances at the festival?

This is a very good question. I think that if by "Chinese qualities" you mean pentatonic scales or any traditional instruments or samples of them, I would have to say no. I would compare it to the visual arts, where it's easy to understand that despite the fact the Chinese have been using the brush to write or paint for over 4,000 years, that doesn't mean we'll still be using it for the

A FEW YEARS AGO, IF YOU WENT TO CHINA AND HEARD PEOPLE TALKING ABOUT "CHINESE AVANT-GARDE," YOU'D SAY, "OH, WOW! THERE'S A CHINESE AVANT-GARDE?" BUT THEY WOULD REALLY BE TALKING ABOUT PUNK ROCK.



Dajun Yao. Photo by Randy Yau

next 4,000 years. It's the same in the West—most serious visual artists don't use oil paints anymore. But in terms of the *real* core of "Chineseness," I think that comes from other elements, not scales or timbres. It comes from certain attitudes, spirits, or philosophies. I think that a good comparison is the Japanese avant-garde, because they often do not use traditional Japanese instruments or scales—nobody would use traditional Japanese scales in modern music! However, you can still feel a strong Japanese element. That's the national character, where there's a certain violence or silence—the elements are very abstract.

Was there also a major Western influence in the Chinese performers at the festival?

Yes. Not only Western influences, but they operated within the Western-inspired format. Right now, it's impossible to perform this music without having a prior knowledge of Japanese noise, European electronica, or French *musique concrète*. It's *totally* in the Western framework. ¶ I think there are two features of recent Chinese history that have particularly affected the new music scene. First, we must consider the total isolation from the world for the past 50 years. Now that everything has opened up and the Internet makes everything so accessible, it's as if the floodgates have opened. Young people in China are all about the latest stuff: British pop music, the latest noise from America or Japan. We expect some concern about the loss of their cultural heritage, but to young people in China, it's a burden—it's just old stuff; it's moldy and not in fashion. ¶ This leads me to the other feature: the total disjunction from China's own cultural heritage. The sudden rupture in cultural history has made much of tradi-

tional Chinese culture for two generations obsolete. The Chinese tradition is not a natural inheritance, where if you're Chinese, you suddenly inherit the rich cultural tradition of the past 5,000 years. Just as you were saying, "How come there's no Chinese elements heard in this music?" I would have to say that even if they wanted to play traditional Chinese music, they could not do it—they don't have the knowledge of what it is. Of course, they could get some CDs and sample from them, but in order to do a good manipulation of the sample, you really have to *know* it. It's this total disjunction from their own past that makes them go forward without looking back. If you do not educate yourself about it by will, then it's not a natural inheritance. It was not part of the education of the last two generations, so it's all lost.

It seems like one very significant thing about today's generation of electronic and noise artists from China is that they are too young to remember the Tiananmen Square massacre and the Cultural Revolution, both cases where their government was nakedly oppressive. Would you say that plays a major part in their art?

Yes, I think a very prominent feature of this generation of young musicians is that they're not concerned with politics. That could be shocking to most people. During the early '90s and particularly in the '80s, when rock'n'roll started booming in China, it was *all* about politics. The major body of their lyrics were about revolt, repression, and criticism. But in the late '90s and early '00s, these people just don't care. They're so young, they don't really know what happened before. [laughs] ¶ I think that a lot of young people there today are into getting the latest stuff like cell-

phones. The cellphone is so important in modern Chinese life, it's unimaginable. When these musicians got together at the festival, they just talked about the latest versions of software and MIDI instruments. That's what they're concerned with: the latest stuff. [laughs]

It's interesting how rock radicalized a lot of Chinese people in the '80s. Did Western punk rock have a major impact on China?

Punk music is the major musical genre for young people in China. Actually, punk is so huge, I don't know how to describe it! But in my analysis of the musical ecology of China, punk music is in the position of the avant-garde. A few years ago, if you went to China and heard people talking about "Chinese avant-garde," you'd say, "Oh, wow! There's a Chinese avant-garde?" But they would really be talking about punk rock.

What do you think we can expect from China in the next decade?

That's a very hard question. I would say there will be a lot of artistic creativity flowing, not only within the country but in exchange with the outside world. That's what I've been doing, bringing people out and bringing people in. What amazes me the most and pushes me to do all of these very costly activities and events is the amount of raw talent I see in China. I think that despite everything, whether it's government censorship, poverty, or the unavailability of information, all of that does not really matter when you see the talent that's there. The people in China are what matter. ©

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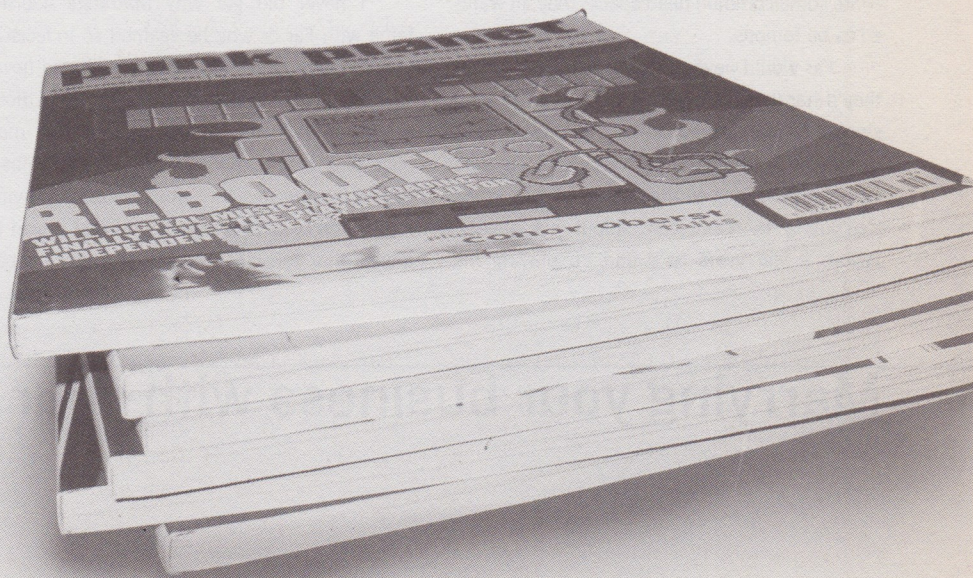
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I don't understand Jonah Matranga—never have, really. When people would tell me about this strange 30-something man in the bottom of all these strangers' basements playing music with a toy sidekick (seriously), it always seemed like a bit of a joke. No one honestly acts that way, do they? But the thing that these people seemed to love about Matranga was that he was honest—especially within his dimly-lit songs. To me, many of his songs always seemed too sincere to be believed, or too over-the-top to withstand ridicule. It seemed to me that as an artist Matranga was almost begging to be mocked, and I've never been one to like something that I also wanted to laugh at. But that's just me.

A lot of people feel for Matranga and his solo work with Onlinedrawing as something else entirely. They don't want to laugh at him. The things that make the more cynical among us laugh, his fans love deeply.

It's been this way since the beginning, when Matranga began his somewhat-accidental career singing in a post-hardcore band from Sacramento called Far. Heavy on the dynamics and emotional gushing, Far never seemed like a natural fit with the tag-metal camp they would eventually get lumped in with—other central California dirtheads like Korn and the Deftones. But as unlikely as this pairing seemed, they did share some common head space: they all wanted to be famous.

Far would never become famous—in fact they'd hardly even become noticed, even after signing to a major label. The group eventually disbanded and Matranga began playing solo as Onlinedrawing to the delight of many fans too young to really care about his history. Within a few years he'd end up playing his

songs in both the boardrooms and the basements, amassing a cult following of weepie intellectual teens and assorted tortured romantics. Somewhere along the way he formed a band called New End Original with former Texas Is The Reason guitarist Norman Arenas. The fact that their band name was essentially the words "one line drawing" rearranged, seemed like an ample analogy for the project's jumbled nature.

Since then, a lot of things have happened—a bit too much to cover here. This summer Matranga began a new band called Gratitude with his long-time friend and former Crumb guitarist Mark Weinberg, and he recorded a second Onlinedrawing record for Jade Tree called *The Volunteers*.

Standing at *The Volunteers*' center is the song "Livin' Small," which is essentially a hummed journal entry about the confusing life he's created for himself. One notable lyric goes: "I don't know if I'll make a million dollars / Who knows, maybe if I return those calls." He later sings, "If that's what passes these days for living large / Then I'm happy living small." The sentiment is admirable, though the meaning gets confused when you find out that by the time you read this, Gratitude will have signed to Atlantic Records, reportedly for 1.5 million dollars. I guess when Matranga finally did "return those calls."

I never did get why Matranga courted fame with Far or why he seemed so indecisive about it with Onlinedrawing. But I also never saw the great shakes of him singing to all those kids with his plastic robot, either. A wise man once said that at times if you're not "embarrassed by your life, then you're not really living it." Maybe I just don't grasp that and I need to realize that relevance comes in many shapes

and sizes. But even after talking with Matranga for over two hours—a heavily edited version of our conversation follows—I'm still not any closer to that understanding.

Interview by **Trevor Kelley**

Illustration by **Dustin Mertz**

Do you think that people see you as a fake?

Yeah, I'm sure. [laughs]

Why do you think that is?

I think I overwhelm people. When I'm emoting, for better or for worse, that's me being a mess and trying to work some shit out. Not in some stupid therapy way, either—I really *do* believe in pop music as transcendent catharsis. I'm not cynical about that whatsoever. ¶ There's a song on the new record called "Over It," that goes "make me into a sincere mess, dumkopf, hopeless hypocrite." That song is a funny mash-up for me about being cynical and skeptical, but of also being a fucking mess. I'm not saying "a mess" in any self-pitying way, either. I mean that I am a mess the way that *all* of us are a mess.

There's another moment on that same record called "Livin' Small" where you sing in a really simple and really celebratory way about this life you've created. One thing that I still like about that song is that it points out that this life is not that simple.

Living small is my ideal, but I'm a fucking mess that way too. I dream of being in *Rolling Stone* as much as the next kid. I'm very open about that. *No one* has strapped on a guitar and not dreamed of that. It's like being a fireman when you're a little kid.

Marrying your business with your art is fucking hard...



onelinedrawing

I dream of being in *Rolling Stone* as much as the next kid. I'm very open

Was there a time that you thought Onlinedrawing was going to be a means to that?

I've had this history with people with money believing that I can be this "next big thing." Far never had a big budget pushed at us, but after we broke up I had a million people tell me how we could have been huge. I've had lots of major label people come to me over the years with Onlinedrawing saying, "If you just did this and that, the kids would eat this shit up." But I don't think what I do is a mainstream thing. ¶ With Onlinedrawing I ended up talking to a label. There was a guy there I met through a friend who really seemed authentically interested in the music. I felt so happy that it was happening so naturally. I talked to him for probably two years. Then he said, "I want you to come down and play for some people at the office."

You're talking about Virgin Records, right?

If you want me to name names, sure, that's who it was. I kept telling him that I couldn't do the dog and pony show, but eventually I went down and I played for the guy that signed the Spice Girls. I sat there with an acoustic guitar in front of them and I played all of my songs. But, low and behold, he didn't get it. There was some polite conversation and I left feeling sick. I had been talking to this guy for such a long time and I trusted him. I trusted that he was saying that we were going to do this together because he loved it. Then he brought me down and *that* happened? I was really upset about the situation. What I realized was that none of that was about money—it was about having something to tell my grandfather at Thanksgiving.

That's completely understandable, actually.

I'm scared that what I'm doing isn't respectable in the eyes of my friends and family. I'm very insecure about that. That's where all of the discomfort was coming from. Letting go of the idea that Onlinedrawing was going to be on a major had much more to do with that than it did money. I knew right then that I could never be in a situation where I would have to play for someone to have them believe in what I do.

But wait, isn't that exactly what you did with Gratitude?

OK, so here I am five years later. My friend Mark, who I've known for 10 years, has been slogging away at getting a deal for a really long time. He comes to me one day and is like, "You know what, I think I'm going to break up my band and get a job." I was so impressed that he was letting go of what I knew was a big dream for him. That was one of the most honest things I've seen him do. I made some joke about us doing music together. It was truly the first time I wanted to do it, because it was the first time I heard him being humble about music. So he got all hot and bothered. That led to our friend Jason, who has known Mark for 10 years and works at this big management company. All of a sudden we had high-powered management! I've had the worst times in my life with managers. But here was a guy that I've known for 10 years and that Mark was best friends with, and his management company Velvet Hammer happens to have a label deal with Atlantic. So we make a fancy demo that Jason plays for the people at Atlantic and then we went out there and played for them.

So you went to Atlantic and played for them just like you did with Virgin?

Yeah, but no one was promising me that it was a done deal. I didn't want to have them tell me a whole bunch of sweet things, and then have someone higher up not like it. With Gratitude I called Jade Tree and said I have this new band, and I didn't want it to be on Jade Tree. One of the reasons was partly because they were these total fucking pop songs that I really wanted to be all big and fancy. ¶ Look at what happened with Far. With Sony there wasn't some big cash payoff. That was the point. I've never been a dogmatic indie rocker. I've never been a purist in the sense that if you can't do it all, then you shouldn't do any of it. I'm totally down with that but it's not the stand I chose to take.

But for me—and I suppose people like me—the argument isn't whether being on a major label is either good or bad. Honestly, I don't think it's either. I'm concerned about what an artist does on those labels.

With Gratitude, there probably will be a lot of promotion money behind us . . .

That's already set, isn't it? I was floored by the amount of money I heard floating around—it was in the millions.

Well, the money isn't spent until it's spent. It doesn't matter what they promised to you, give it one week without doing the Vegas expectations people have and they're out of there. When people hear about a million dollar record deal, the only money you should look at is the bonus. I think the White Stripes really did get a million dollars to sign. We didn't get that. ¶ Creatively and professionally, I am a person with nothing to lose. I haven't faked myself with any of this and I



about that. *No one* has strapped on a guitar and not dreamed of that.

am *amazed* that Atlantic wants to invest in what I do. I don't know why they think it's going to be a big thing. But you know what? It might be.

You keep putting this in very listless terms—aren't you afraid that this could actually wind up being a rather dangerous venture?

Do you mean in terms of a backlash?

I guess that's one way of looking at it. When you stop and think about it, I do believe that people came to Onlinedrawing because it felt sort of friendly. I'm not sure if it will feel that way anymore.

This is just a choice I'm making. I didn't sit around and think, "Well, I have this indie rock career going and people seem to respect me, maybe now I'll go get a major label deal." I never thought to go and put some shit together so that I can be really principled with my career.

But that's what you did.

No, it wasn't.

It was, though: you put together a band and tried to get a major label deal.

Marrying your business with your art is fucking hard and most musicians don't touch it because they dumb down and call other people sellouts—I'm just not into that. I've always been interested in who could help. ¶ The best part about this would be that after everything I've been through with auditioning for people and getting through with my own stupid dreams about fame, maybe I can let it all go. I put out a song called "Livin' Small" and signed to Atlantic in the same year. I know that! [laughs] When someone points out, "What a fake! He wrote this tune and he went and

did this!" Don't people know that I'm smart enough to see that?

I'm not saying that it's a huge revelation. I'm just saying that it can change things. The first time I heard that song, I thought it was quite beautiful. But over time it began to feel almost like a lie. I'm not calling you a liar, it's just that I know now that you were trying to get signed by a major label while you were doing all of this. That seeps out of the speakers.

When I say, "I don't know if I'll make a million dollars / I don't know, maybe if I return those calls," that's verbatim my mind's dialogue from the last year. That's not me saying, "I'll *never* make a million fucking dollars because I'll *never* return those calls." It's about me being indecisive. The irony for me is that "Livin' Small" is a really memorable and hooky song. I wouldn't be surprised if someone didn't want to make a video out of it and market it. People would probably fucking buy it.

This is a song taking aim at bands that don't care about Clear Channel or who wouldn't think twice about being on a tour sponsored by a cell phone company. It would be very easy to assume this was a song written by someone who stands firmly against those things. But you're telling me that if it was marketed right it could be huge? I don't know. I wouldn't think that would even occur to the person who wrote that song.

For better or for worse, though, that's me. "I'm happy living small" is not a statement of rebellion. It's a very personal statement. What I mean by "living small" is not about living in a little shack, it's about living with humility. The best source of humility for me is watching all of our ideals crashing into one another.

The second you think you've got it figured out and you've got your little dogmatic plan—that's bullshit. That's what that song is about.

This assessment may come off as sort of unfair, but you do seem to have this history where every so often you return to the large-scale rock band—but it's not something you've triumphed with. Onlinedrawing is a very intimate thing, and it's clearly been successful as just that. But as far as having a band that can move hundreds of thousands of people at a time as opposed to a dozen people in the basement, you haven't gotten there. I assume that's why you keep returning to it.

That's a totally fair way to deconstruct it. But to pick out that impulse because it happens to have the ring of commercial ambition would be false. You'd really have to go back to the beginning of Far to find a person looking to do things on that level. ¶ Thankfully I haven't turned into a schizophrenic xenophobe because of this. I've turned into someone who is honest about the fact that he's really confused. As openly as I can, I'm asking for help. In the verse of "Over It" I'm being very cynical and misanthropic—the first line is "everyone's a crowd." I want everyone away from me. It's like, "Fuck you, it's fine if you want to call me a liar," but then the chorus is saying, "I get mad and I'm sorry." That's about helplessness. But I also hope that it's empowering. I hope it is saying, "Let's all be uncool enough to ask for help."

That's a big thing to own up to.

What can I say? I hate faking it. I've never said I'm anything I'm not. The first thing I've ever said about anything to anyone is that I'm *confusing*—because that's what I am. ©

Craig Thompson

Craig Thompson is able to turn the saddest of moments into the most sublime. In his 1999 graphic novel, *Goodbye, Chunky Rice*, a ship captain looks into the sea, despondent after the death of his wife and says, "From here on, the sea will be my only friend." It's a moment that hits you in the gut—the book is filled with those types of moments—but Thompson always manages to keep the story hopeful. In the end, the same captain stands at the bow of his ship and declares, "I love the sea because it is *boundless*."

You love Thompson's stories because they too, seem boundless—filled with endless possibility, with of hope when things seem the most hopeless.

Chunky Rice was something of an enigma when it came out: an engaging graphic novel (that was decidedly for adults) about a little turtle leaving his home for the first time, created by a then-unknown comic artist, and released as a complete edition, not serialized like normal comics. But there was something there that clicked and *Chunky Rice* reached an audience far wider than Thompson, or his indie comic publisher Top Shelf, could have ever imagined.

The success of *Chunky Rice* landed Thompson in a rare position: that of a successful comic artist. He could pick seemingly any project he wanted to pursue next (though he did have to do side work to actually pay the bills—this is underground comics, after all). The project he picked though, surprised everyone.

Blankets, Thompson's follow-up to *Chunky Rice*, is a 600 page brick of a comic. Autobiographical to an almost painful degree, the book takes the sad/sublime mix of *Chunky Rice* but removes the cute, anthropomorphized

characters and fantastical settings and replaces them with, well, Thompson's own life as a boy in rural Wisconsin.

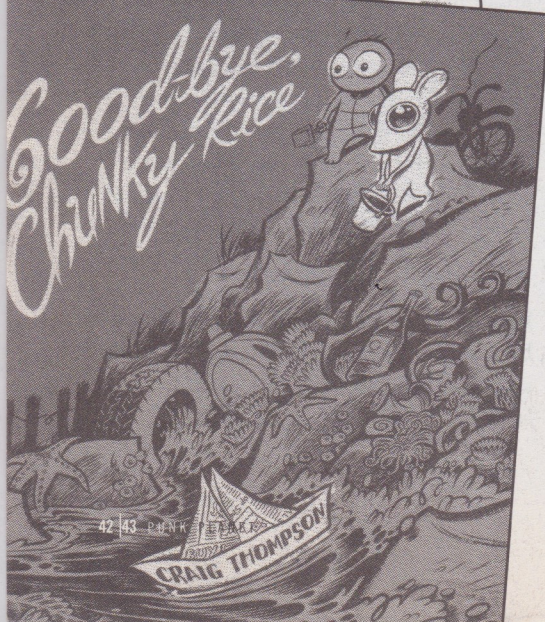
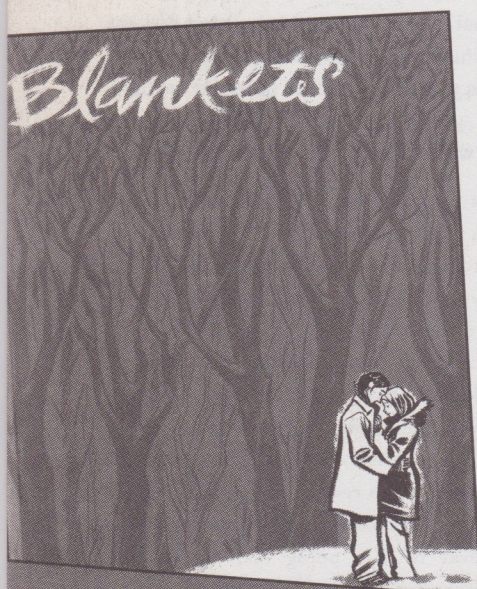
The story is a coming-of-age tale about Thompson growing up in a sheltered, oppressively religious home, and discovering through first love that the world is much bigger than he ever knew. The book is harrowing—Thompson's home life was abusive, his school life no better—and the fact that it's true makes it all the more difficult to read. But once again, Thompson proves that the sad can give way to the sublime.

I spoke with Thompson after *Blankets* won *Time* magazine's online poll for 2003's best graphic novel and a few months before the book is released in Europe. We spoke about his unexpected success, the vitality of comics, and the uncomfortable work of revealing hard truths.

Interview by Daniel Sinker

You really put yourself out there in your books. You reveal so much about yourself and put yourself in such a vulnerable position in your books. What motivates you to do that?

A large part of it is just needing to communicate certain feelings in the easiest venue for me to communicate in. I think part of it's related to growing up in the Midwest. Growing up there, you don't necessarily have the vocabulary to talk about your feelings or deep issues. I really clung to drawing—and later comics—as a way to communicate things I didn't know how to express otherwise. Also, those are the types of stories I like to read: I want the author to be vulnerable. I want to read personal, intimate stories. I don't have any



I don't think the comics medium is *inherently* made for the stories that are normally told in it.

interest in action movies or heavily over-plotted narratives.

It's interesting that you've chosen comics as your medium then, as certainly the traditional stories told with comics are *precisely* those types of stories.

That's funny though, because I don't think the comics medium is *inherently* made for the stories that are normally told in it. In terms of the history of comics, it really developed into a child's medium or explosive science fiction action stories, but now we have videogames to fill that niche, so it doesn't really make sense anymore for comic books to continue following that path. I think comics are much better suited for stories that are really personal because one creator can be in control of *everything*. All the elements come from your hand. It has this really intimate, hand-drawn nature to the form. And a reader interacts with a comic book on their own terms. It's not like a movie theater where you're in a crowd of people and are being washed over by all these sounds and sights, you take comics at your own pace and at your own time and space. It seems perfectly suited for these types of stories.

That's a really sophisticated take on comics coming from a guy who grew up in rural Wisconsin!

When I was a kid, we didn't have any comic books around. My brother and I were big mail-order junkies. We would mail-order comics through the mail. Later on when we made the transition to skateboarding, we



had to order our complete decks through the mail as well. We were totally isolated from comics and skateboarding, but thanks to the wonder of mail-order, we were able to experience it.

Even being connected to the world via mail-order, it's a very sophisticated approach. How did it come about?

I was resistant of the medium for a long time. All through high school I had friends who read comic books and would try and sell me on them by dragging me to the stores or lending me copies of books they had, but I just could never get into it. It was weird because I liked cartoons, but I thought comics were just *awful*. It was a really long process before I liked them. ¶ Dylan Horrick's book, *Pickle*, was a big revelation for me. It was one of the first black and white comics I bought after moving into the city. The issue I bought focused a lot on cartoonists and languages that you can't read and how you can appreciate the artistry of it as an international language. There was something special about that issue that really inspired me and made me realize that you could do *anything* with the form.

And so where did you go from there? Was it an immediate click and then you were making your own comics, or did you do a lot more research into the medium itself?

I did start making comics right away. I went and got those cheesy books at the library that teach you how to make comics, but I ended up dropping a lot of those ideas pretty quickly. The whole mini-comics movement was a revelation and I started making my own mini-comics. The print runs were never bigger than 50 copies. I lucked out right away because I got hooked up with John Porcellino when he was running the whole Spit-and-a-Half emporium of mini-comics distribution. Thanks to him not only was I able to get the book outside of Milwaukee, Wisconsin where I was living at the time, but he also helped me meet this great community of cartoonists. That was a big revelation too: to realize we were connected by this subcultural thread.

Somehow in not that long a spread of time you went from making 50 copy mini-comics to a 600-page graphic novel that wasn't released

serialized. That's a hugely ambitious leap.

I knew right away that I didn't want to do a pamphlet comic. I don't like them. I've never been good at collecting or organizing them—they just sit in grocery bags in my closet. I like bookshelves and books and so I knew right away that I wanted to go at it with that angle. And I didn't think that I'd make any money if I did serialize it, so I figured why not just go ahead and finish the book. Also, I had a bit of snotty edge in a way because I was already signed into contract with Top Shelf before I did *Chunky Rice*. I was obligated to do a book for them and they were obligated to publish it. So I didn't feel bad pushing the boundaries with the size.

So what was the day like when you called Chris and Brett at Top Shelf and said, "Yeah, it's going to be 600 pages long and, oh by the way, it's going to be about me."

They were pretty accepting, actually. They're really hands-off. I just delivered the book to them.

How do you go about starting a project as big as *Blankets*? Did you think it was going to be 600 pages long when you started?

I thought it would be about half that size. I spent a year building a thumbnail copy—it was a backburner project that I did while I was working on other things to pay the bills. I had an initial draft and then I edited it all—I would take out 100 pages, add in 100, 200 pages, and finally it was finished: a huge pile of pages. I worked well with that routine. When I was working on it I was fairly productive: 10 pages a week, a few pages a day. It was this sense of comfort and stability in the midst of all the other chaos in my life.

I could see a project like that quickly becoming a living hell. But that this massive, epic project was a refuge for you. How do you think that reflects on you?

[laughs] There are good and bad sides about that. People could accuse me of being a workaholic or distracting myself sometimes through work. But in other ways, the book was therapy. It was a way to work through a lot of things. It's something I've done since I was a kid: finding comfort in drawing and art. And it's an escape in a sense, though I

don't want the stories that I tell to be confused with escapism.

I don't think they're an escape to read at all. You really just hit a lot of stuff head on. It seems like with the transition from *Chunky Rice* to *Blankets*, you lost the veil of fictionalizing your life. With *Chunky Rice* you used cute, anthropomorphized animals in place of yourself and your friends. But with *Blankets*, it's you. It's your family. Why?

I was really reluctant about the autobiographical part in *Blankets*. I was reluctant about the idea of showing my family and other people I care about on paper because of the risk of offending them. But right away from the beginning, I had some themes I wanted to work on. And I just started meditating on my own experience and realized there was already a story there. I thought about mixing it up and making it fictionalized, but that took away from some of the fun and the challenge. I was also definitely sick of drawing cute animals after finishing *Chunky Rice*.

Obviously, you got over worrying about people's reactions to being in *Blankets*. I'm curious as to how people did react and how you made yourself OK with what I can't imagine were entirely positive reactions.

The worry didn't really abate for the whole course of working on it. I made it a point of not even showing it to my parents before sending it to press. I did give them some sort of heads up, but I didn't want to show it to them and have them disapprove of it entirely beforehand. I'd rather get it out there and then deal with the consequences. ¶ My family has trouble communicating things. We're not communicators, especially about a lot of the religious themes I brought up in the book. I figured, "Well, *this* will kick off the discussion." And it definitely did. [laughs] It was really bad at first. I went to visit shortly after the book came out and had to share a car drive from Minneapolis to Milwaukee with my parents alone. They were *enraged*. The first thing they were really upset about was "what right did you have to make our private lives public?" But their biggest issue was the Christian element. It was the first time we had ever discussed my abandonment of Christianity and it lasted six hours in the car. It was *hard-core*. ¶ Over time, my parents have become much

more accepting about how the book represents them and my right to tell it in the first place. But I did grow up in a small town, and they have a copy sitting out at the hairdresser and at the dentist's office. I forget what small towns are like and how everybody knows each other and how this would be a big spectacle for them. I asked them at the end of the year how they were handling how they were depicted in it, and they claimed that they were over that. They'll never get over the Christian thing though. We had another big discussion on Christmas day about how Jesus was praying for me. That will never change.

Did you expect that reaction? You had to have.

Yeah, I did pretty much. That discussion was really exhausting, but it wasn't that difficult. It had been building up for so long that it was almost refreshing to have all my cards out on the table. But it really wore me out.

How did other people that were in the book react to it?

In some regards, I'm actually not sure. Raina—the character—is actually a hybrid of two girls. On the surface, she's exclusively the high school girl, but there are a lot of elements of this girl I was longing for at the time—and we ended up together. I actually ended up hearing from the high school girl on Christmas Day, 2003. We hadn't spoken in almost 10 years and it was pretty surreal. I haven't heard back from her since she learned about the book and I am really concerned about that angle now. I want to make sure I didn't offend her or her family.

Wow. That is so . . . not how I would do it.

How would you do it?

I don't know. I would be so terrified of launching something like that out without at least giving a pretty good—vague, but good—warning. I'm a little speechless right now.

In terms of the high school girl, we weren't in touch in any form—I had cut off the relationship back then and just figured that the ball was out of my court and it wasn't right to contact her.

In a way I just think god, that's so brave. Do you think of it that way?

No. [laughs] I was just hoping it wouldn't be creepy.

It doesn't come across creepy to an outside reader. I'm actually curious about what you expected an impartial reader's response to be to *Blankets*?

I was nervous that, because it's auto-bio, it would come off self-centered or egocentric and people wouldn't be able to identify with it. But it's been quite the contrary, which has been really pleasing—an incredibly diverse amount of people identify with it. I was on my little tour this summer and people from all different backgrounds really found something to identify with in it. They'd come up and share their own stories with me. This spring I'll be going to Europe because the French, Italian, Spanish, and Dutch editions of *Blankets* are going to be released.

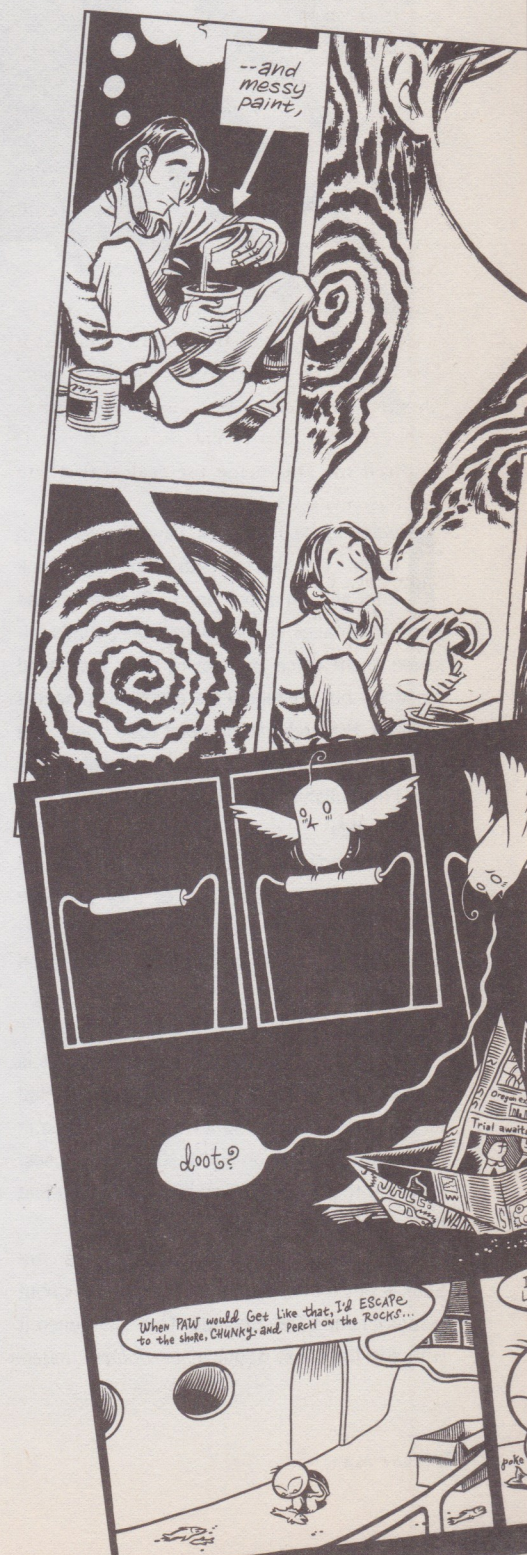
So then where do you go from here—besides Europe?

I've started a new book. I'm treading even more delicate ground on this one. [laughs] For lack of a better term, it's an Arabian folk tale of my own making. I'm playing around with a lot of Arabic and Islamic art and calligraphy. I've been doing a lot of research but I don't know if I'm totally qualified to tell this kind of story. I'm trying to not tread on what Edward Said calls "orientalism." The story itself deals with a lot of sexual trauma. I had a friend read the initial outline for the book which includes, among other things, rape, child molestation, castration, and incest. My friend read the outline and was kind of disturbed—he didn't think there were any marketable qualities to the book. I found that to be a nice challenge. I have a vision of it being fairly universal. The main characters are a eunuch and a prostitute, and I think everyone can identify with that. All of us have played the eunuch and the prostitute at one point or another.

Craig, why not tell a nice little story?

[laughs] I don't know. I'm pretty obsessed with both the beauty and sadness of everything. With this new book, I really want to focus in on beauty and love because—as cheesy as it sounds—those are the main things I'm interested in. But I think they'll always be accompanied and balanced out by awful stuff. ☺

People could accuse me of being a workaholic or distracting myself sometimes through work. But in other ways, the book was therapy.





"I want to be in a rock band!" says Brian Cook. This isn't wishful thinking. Cook after all *is* in a rock band—Seattle's These Arms Are Snakes, a band with a buzz that's followed them since practically their first band practice—but somehow his enthusiasm seems strained. His exclamation point feels a lot more like a question mark. "I just don't want to feel like I'm bullshitting people, you know?" he quickly adds.

Right now Cook and vocalist Steve Snere are talking to me about issues they normally don't talk about in a club they wouldn't normally set foot in: LA's former hair-metal heaven the Rainbow Room.

And all of this is intentional.

It's probably worth mentioning that this is probably the first and last time that you'll read an interview in *Punk Planet* that takes place in a bar formerly occupied by Guns N' Roses. Consider this a playful way of showing you just how much things have changed.

A few months ago, These Arms Are Snakes put the finishing touches on their debut record for Jade Tree Records. They sharpened it with the time they spent in overlooked under-

ground bands like Botch, Kill Sadie, and Nineironspitfire. When they were done, they emerged with *This Is Meant To Hurt You*, one of the most artistic and powerful swipes of screamy angst that was heard in 2003.

Record execs, the kids in the mall, and middle-aged rock critics have all taken to calling this sort of music "screamo," and it has begun to resonate with mainstream music fans. But by standing on the outside of such a movement—while doing the style better than any of the bands they've suddenly found themselves being aligned with—These Arms Are Snakes have found themselves in a unique position: better than the trends, and smart enough to steer clear of them.

"There's a lot of gray area now," says Cook. "We're just set on putting out the records we want and we're still trying to do interesting and more difficult things with them."

He then glances at a billboard across the street of an '80s hair metal legend—yesterday's screamo, some might say—before smiling widely.

"I just don't want to be that guy."

Interview by **Trevor Kelley**

Photos by **Robin Laananen**

Do you realize some of the expectations people have for this band?

Steve: There are expectations for this band? [laughs]

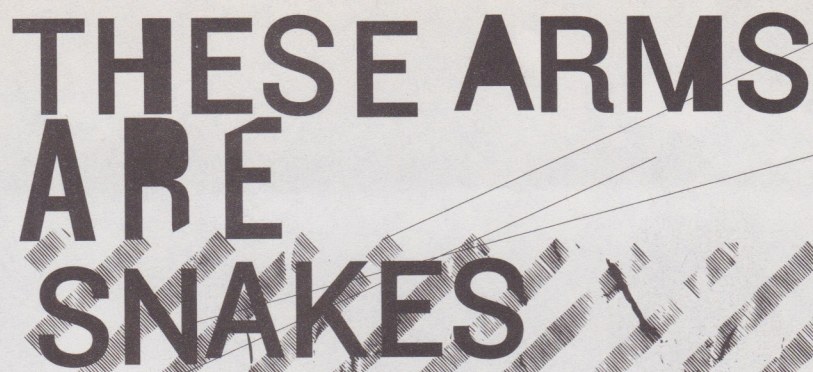
Yeah, I'd say so.

Steve: I guess I know a little bit about that, but I rarely get to hear it first hand. If there are people saying that they think These Arms Are Snakes are going to "do something amazing" or that we're going to "change music," I haven't heard about that *at all*. If you're telling me there *is*, I think that's going to freak me out. [laughs] So what are people saying?

With all of the bands right now, it seems like there's a real void for artists doing this type of music in a more forward-thinking or artistic way. There are a lot of people whom I really respect that have begun to think that you guys are capable of filling that void.

Steve: I don't know how to respond to that. Being in a band there is a whole outside world that you communicate with as far as music or business bullshit goes. I often see

THESE ARMS ARE SNAKES



things that I don't *want* to be involved in, but in order to be a successful band you *have* to get involved in them. The punk rock scene is not the same as it was when I originally got involved in it. Playing your music is one thing, but all the publicity and all the special interests, what's the point? I can honestly say that I don't have any concern about being a popular artist. This is just something that I do.

Brian: I was actually surprised when the first round of reviews came out, and a lot of them were extremely positive. I just thought, "Do people actually *like* this?"

Do you feel a sense of responsibility that comes along with that? Most bands seem to feel like they have to do something worthwhile when these opportunities are suddenly brought their way.

Brian: Everyone in our band is at that age where we look at these hyped bands as the sort of bands we wouldn't be interested in. All of the bands that get big overnight tend to be very bland artistically. It's definitely a weird feeling to think that for some people

we *are* that band. Those bands are supposed to be the ones that we end up talking trash about. [laughs] So when you ask "What are you going to do with all of these opportunities?" to me that's a very broad statement. Does it mean that we're going to sign to Universal? No, it doesn't.

Steve: That's the thing about all of the bands getting signed right now. They're picking these really young kids who are so new to music. The people at the labels tell them, "Look, you're going to go *do this* now," and they're going to do it. I couldn't imagine a major label really talking to a band like us. I've talked to people who work in the industry and they know that bands that have been around for a while are really hard to work with. They have their feet dug in the ground and they're going to do what they want to do.

Do you see that becoming a much rarer thing?

Brian: I really do believe that you can take that route without losing control of your life. I think everyone wants to believe that they're alive because they're meant to do

something important. When you're famous, it really is easy to believe that whatever you are doing is important and that is why you are a famous person. But when you go to a show and some kid is like, "You're in a band, can you sign this?" Framed in that regard, it doesn't seem very important.

Steve: It really doesn't. To be looked at in a different way from anyone else . . . I fucking hate that.

You would be surprised by how few people can honestly say that.

Steve: But that has *never* mattered to me. As much as I feel like we've moved up to a different level with These Arms Are Snakes, there's no fucking difference. I'm still ending up homeless—in fact, I'm homeless right now. If I'm lucky my life will end up with me in an apartment somewhere. That's all I'm going to have. Maybe I'll get married or maybe I'll have a family, but I know I won't be famous. I know I'm never going to have a million dollars. I'm just going to be your average dude and I'm OK with that.



I CAN HONESTLY SAY THAT I DON'T HAVE ANY CONCERN ABOUT BEING A POPULAR ARTIST. THIS IS JUST SOMETHING THAT I DO.

As someone who spends a lot of time around the bands that we're talking about here, I can genuinely say that your feelings are not shared. A lot of these bands *do* find that to be important—they have no problems telling you that they want to be famous.

Brian: Right now we've been playing shows with Hot Water Music. There's a band that has been around forever, has a huge fan base, and has worked hard. You would think shit would happen for them. But instead it's Brand New that gets big. What the fuck, man, *Brand New*? [laughs] I like doing interviews and I like sitting here and talking to you. But I've signed an autograph every night of this tour, and if that's what fame is, I really don't want that.

Do you ever feel like you have a problem with the idea of being an entertainer?

Steve: For me, this is just what I do—end of story. But then people will want to talk to me because I do this and that can fuck with me. When I was younger I used to always think that I didn't care what anybody thought. I always said, "I'm not doing it for them, I'm doing it for myself." In my years I've learned that, yeah, I do it for myself, but to say that you don't do it for anyone else is *bullshit*. I don't fucking care who you are, you want people to enjoy what you're doing as much as you are enjoying what you're doing. I'm here to entertain

you, but I'm also doing something for me. If there are five people there or 1,000, I'm going to be doing the same fucking thing every night. I guess that's entertainment.

But who's to say that has to be a bad thing?

Brian: Art and entertainment are not synonymous with one another. Obviously they overlap a lot, and I do hope we provide some sense of entertainment. I don't want to say that we're strictly art, because I don't think that's exactly what this band is all about. Larry Livermore made a good point once when he said that art is essentially communication. If you are saying that you're doing it for yourself, then you're just lying. You are always trying to convey something so that you can share it with someone else. You're trying to get them to feel something that you're feeling. I do this because it makes me happy, but it's so much better when someone else gets it, too.

It seems like it's getting harder to say what's happened to that communication. When you tell me about kids coming up to you asking for your autograph—not because they like your band, but because they know that you are in a band—I'm not sure that's what I signed up for.

Brian: The bottom line is that it's hard not to play music. It's even harder to not play it for other people. Once you open

that door you can't say no to certain things. When you're offered the opportunity to play to more and more people, it takes a lot of willpower to say no to that. I could play to a living room full of my friends and they *will* all love it, or I could play to a theater full of strangers and they *might* all love it. How do I say no to thousands of people who want to be into the same thing as I am?

Steve: Over the years, I've seen a lot of my friends try so hard at this. They were in good bands that were popular, but now they are *completely* over all of this shit. It's scary because you put so much work and so much time and so much energy into this and then it's gone. That does scare me. How much am I willing to lose to be in another dime-a-dozen band?

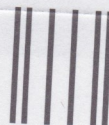
Are you really afraid that people will see this as just another band?

Steve: Right now we're saturated with bands. With These Arms Are Snakes and all of the publicity going on behind it, I do wonder if we're just setting ourselves up to be judged. I don't like people looking at me that way. I'm only used to playing in front of 20 kids a night.

Brian: Yeah, we may need to go back to the basements and VFW halls for a while. [laughs] ©

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with me. When I was younger I always think that I didn't care what anybody thought. I always said, "I'm not doing it for them, I'm doing it for myself." In my years I've learned that, yeah, I do it for myself, but to say that you don't do it for anyone else is *bullshit*. I don't fucking care who you are, you want people to enjoy what you're doing as much as you are enjoying what you're doing. I'm here to entertain

It seems like it's getting harder and harder
happened to that communication. When you
tell me about kids coming up to you asking for
your autograph—not because they like your
band, but because they know that you are *in* a
band—I'm not sure that's what I signed up for.

Brian: The bottom line is that it's hard
not to play music. It's even harder to not
play it for other people. Once you open

of the publicity going on behind it, I do
wonder if we're just setting ourselves up to
be judged. I don't like people looking at me
that way. I'm only used to playing in front
of 20 kids a night.

Brian: Yeah, we may need to go back to
the basements and VFW halls for a
while. [laughs] ©

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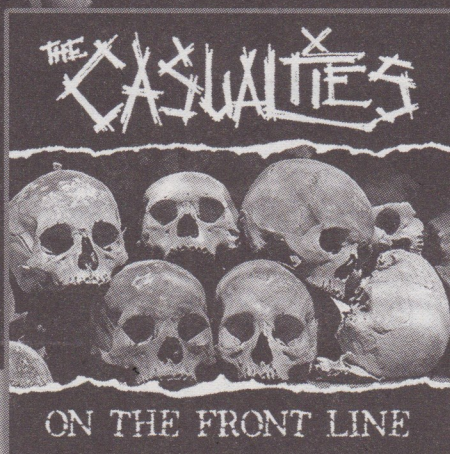
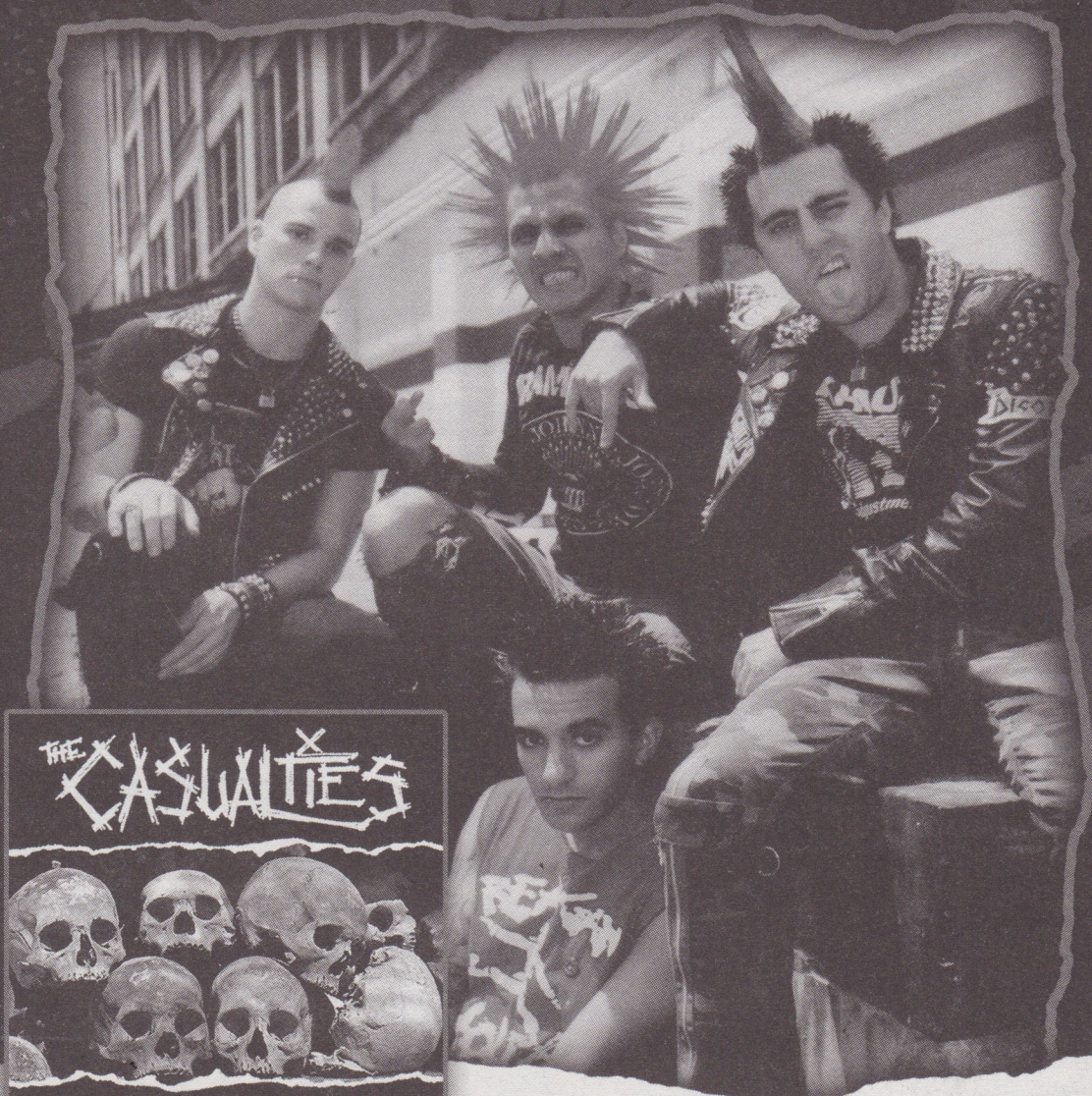
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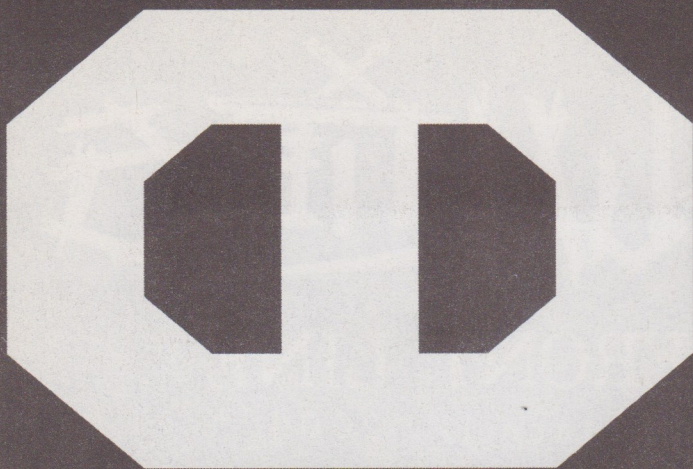
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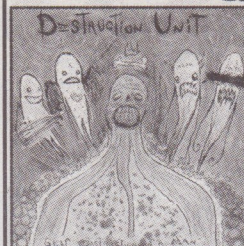
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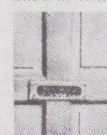
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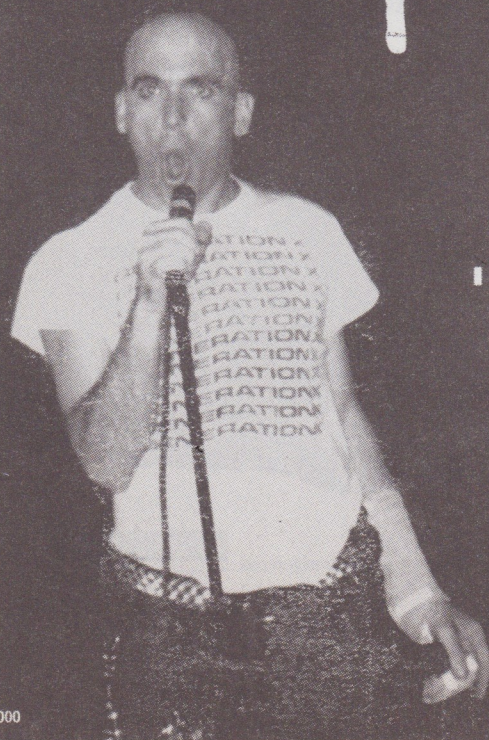
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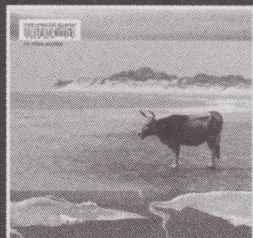
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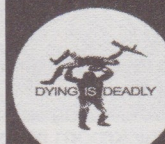


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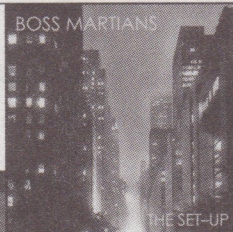


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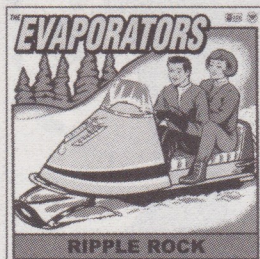
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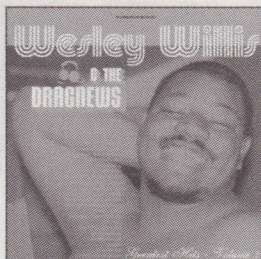
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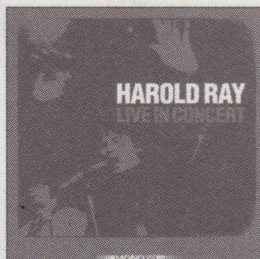
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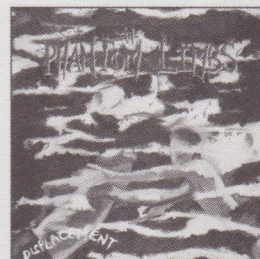
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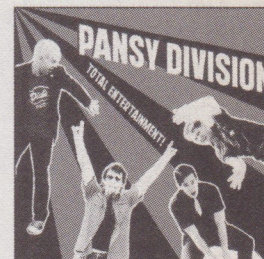
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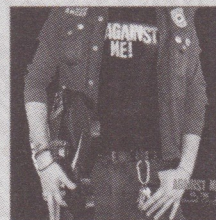
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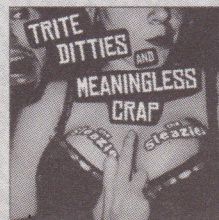
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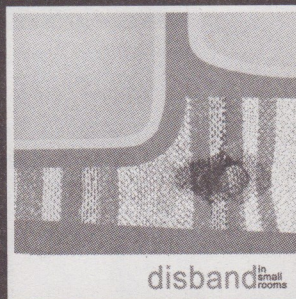
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Everybody Knows



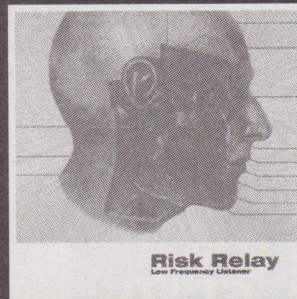
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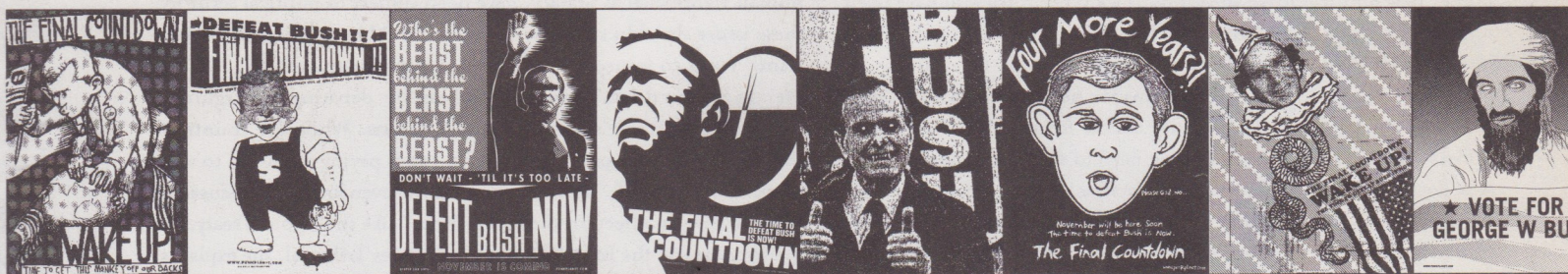


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STOPWATCH ILLUSTRATION / NICK BUTCHER

History is what you make it. For the individuals profiled in the pages that follow, they are not content in allowing history to simply happen to them. They want to help shape it, create it anew. And they want to start now.

For many of us, November's presidential elections seem like a world away—there's so much life to live between these melting spring days and the brisk winds of next fall. But the people chronicled in this section are here to tell you that now is the time to prepare for unseating President Bush. November will, after all, be here before you know it.

The activists, artists, musicians, and organizers we spoke with are a varied lot. Some are old hands at this game, others are brand new; some are reluctant spokespeople, others plunge right in; some have broad, sweeping, romantic goals, others are more practical; many probably disagree with each other. There are people in these pages you've heard of—people like punk rock legend Jello Biafra or People's History historian Howard Zinn—others you'll be reading their names for the first time (though probably not the last). What's important isn't their names, but that they are doing something to turn the country around. Their words are here to inspire—not replace—your own action.

To help spur you on, we invited a series of the underground's best artists and designers to lend their hand and design "Final Countdown" posters—there's one on every page of this section—that are free for you to Xerox and get out there. It's just one way among many to spread the word that the time is *now*.

MAKING A GUERILLA REVOLUTION: The League of Independent Voters

In the back of everyone's head there is definitely an ultimate goal of saving the world," says Adrienne Brown, chairperson of the League of Independent Voters, a group determined to create a potent new political force in 2004. "I want the folks who have been

BY ABBIE JARMAN

living their lives and feeling frustrated to sit down and talk about pragmatic steps to realizing all those positive visions in our daydreams for how the world could be."

The founders of the League, which formed last November, understand that to save the world you need to start at street level. They have devised a multi-pronged plan to catalyze a voting revolution from the community up, building a long-term national progressive constituency that will get average citizens voting, running for office, and holding elected officials accountable during their terms in office.

"It's a mix of people who have never voted before, but are pissed off and want to do something, joining up with people who have been planning progressive strategy for years, explains Brown. "But the heart of the organization is and will continue to be non-organizers, normal people who just want a little democracy."

To reach out to those non-voters, the League is creating and distributing voter guides that outline proposed legislation on the local, state, and national level. The guides provide voters with information about who and what they are voting for when they hit the booth.

Given that so many states rode the fence in the 2000 elections (New Mexico was decided by 366 votes—and don't forget Florida), and that the division between our system's two parties is nearly 50-50, no one can argue that his or her vote does not count. By giving average citizens strategies to politically engage their community, the League hopes to grow strong progressive voting blocs that could swing the vote in November.

"America has great potential, but that potential can only be realized through representation," Brown says. "We are tapping the unrepresented masses, and naturally it's a *huge* population."

An activist herself, Brown realizes the rift organizers unintentionally put between themselves and the general public. Activists often use intimidating jargon and exaggerated decrees and don't spend enough time reaching out to non-activists. The result too often is that activists are disappointed by the general public's disinterest in the issues, and the public is put off by the way activists approach them.

Of course, citizens are disenchanted with the political process

for other reasons. Voting itself is as difficult as filing taxes, and, as Brown points out, every issue has been turned into a political debate between competing factions. "Healthcare and education, even basic human rights such as privacy, have been subject to political scrutiny; these issues shouldn't be debated, they should be givens that we constantly tweak to improve the systems and the quality of life . . . Your average person doesn't want to spend her life debating and arguing."

And then there's the media, says Brown. While the country is shaking in fear over one mad cow, no one is paying attention to what we *should* be afraid of. "A lot of people don't even know what issues out there *do* have an effect on their daily lives," like the Kyoto Treaty, the Patriot Act, and the International War Crimes Tribunal, she explains.

In order to engage the public, Brown believes, activists must find out what it needs, and provide it. "The Black Panthers didn't walk around with guns just shouting and hoping someone would hear them—they brought breakfast to people, cared for people's kids, made an easy-to-follow 10-point plan."

The League is adopting a similar approach in order to create an atmosphere for constructive public dialogue on important political issues. They want to focus on developing effective strategies to improve the democratic process, like "poll watchers" to make sure people are able to vote, and Politics and Pancakes Brunches to introduce progressive citizens to potential supporters in their area.

The League does not expect to change the entire system overnight, but they hope that their focused, local efforts will snowball into widespread change. Brown points out the multitude of things the average individual can do to make a difference: "Vote. Take a friend to vote with you. Volunteer an hour a week for a campaign or voter registration drive. Read one article a day and talk about it with one person. Recycle. Eat less crap. Tell folks what you think. And talk to your family—how can we build movements when we can't come to some peace and agreement in our families?"

Right now, the League is planning their strategy for the November election. League organizers are convinced that the power of the individual can reverse the course the current administration is taking. Given the state of our media and government, it's worth a shot. What doesn't kill us makes us stronger, right? ©

Find out more at www.indyvoter.org

(Some of) President Bush's Greatest Hits Blows

The laundry list of grievances against President George W Bush and his administration seems to be growing at a stupefying pace. Your friends at *Punk Planet* decided to sift through the rhetoric and the reports to produce a brief survey of some of the Bush administration's most notable "accomplishments" since 2000. We turned to the sources we trust (and hopefully sources you might find trustworthy) for

commentary. It goes without saying that this is a primer and that there are holes in the "accomplishments" (not a word about Iraq, for example—look for that elsewhere in this section) we encourage you to pick up where we left off.

Are You A Patriot?

Nearly two years after the Patriot Act was approved with a House vote of 356-to-66 and a Senate vote of 98-to-1, Jeff Fogel of the

Center for Constitutional Rights wrote, "Librarians have rallied against the provisions of the Act which allow the FBI to secure library records of its patrons without their knowledge. Conservatives have criticized provisions allowing the government to monitor our internet activity and expanding the government's power to conduct wiretaps . . . [T]he House of Representatives voted to repeal the law's

FINAL COUNTDOWN 01 / JAN. 2004 THE BIRD MACHINE

THE FINAL COUNTDOWN



We've Got a Bigger Problem Now: Jello Biafra punk rocks the vote

Jello Biafra knows about elections. He's been pushing for punks to vote since his early spoken word tours. He's agitated for the Green Party and spoke at Nader's "super rallies" the last time we had a presidential election. And now he's thrown his formidable name behind

BY DANIEL SINKER

PunkVoter.com, a website founded by Fat Wreck Chords' Fat Mike to help spread the fact that *your vote counts* among punks in the hopes of swinging the election away from Bush.

How is this election different than the 2000 election?

More people see Bush for what he really is, while they gloss over the complete failure of the Democratic party. As important as it is to try and get rid of Bush, I'm still *livid* with the Democrats for not even *bothering* to contest the 2002 election. How much would Bush have gotten away with if there were a few more members of the supposed opposition party in Congress? But they didn't even try—they rolled over and voted to endorse Bush's war *right before* the 2002 election. I'm glad to see how much horseshit is now sticking to the faces of Kerry and Gephardt for their role in helping Bush launch a preemptive war in Iraq. The Democrats in Congress went along with it! And they still are: They gave Bush his \$87 billion bailout to continue Occupation Incorporated, which is actually just a cover for looting the whole place for Bush's buddies like Halliburton and Bechtel. Because of things like that, I still haven't made up my mind exactly where I want to go at the national level this election.

Are you doing any organizing as far as this election goes?

I have jumped in with Fat Mike and PunkVoter.com. The goal is to register half a million punk music fans to help get Bush out of office. That is Mike's primary goal: to get rid of Bush. What interests me about PunkVoter is the potential for not just half a million punk voters helping get rid of Bush, but half a million *lifetime* punk voters who get more decent people elected to other offices and good ballot initiatives passed! ¶ What I worry about is that so many people are going to show up and vote in this *one* election, like they did in '92 with Clinton, and get so heartbroken by the business-as-usual policies of who gets in that they won't vote again. I'm hoping to avoid that by stressing that even if it's a complete circus at the national level, local elections are where it's at. ¶ The local level is where people decide how to spend a lot of the tax money the government takes away from us each year. "Hmm . . . here comes some state and federal money, should we spend it helping homeless people or building a golf

course?" It *all* depends on who's on the city council, who are the county commissioners, who's the mayor and the district attorney.

In the last election, you were closely aligned with Nader and the Greens. What do you think the Greens should do this time around?

I reluctantly feel that Ralph Nader running again may backfire in a very big way because he's become such a magnet of blame for what's happened because of Bush. I think the blame heaped on him is almost completely unfair, but it is a reality. I don't know what to do here. It's very important to work towards getting five percent of the electorate so we can get federal matching funds, but there's going to be a lot of bullying—even from inside the Green Party—that no matter who the Democratic candidate is, don't interfere with anybody's chances to get rid of Bush. ¶ If by some miracle Dennis Kucinich got the nomination, I think Greens would support him. If there were more Democrats like him, the Greens wouldn't be necessary. He has his warts, but I like him far better than any of the other Democrats running. ¶ Dean is second, I guess, but a *very* distant second. He isn't very right-on about the death penalty, gun control, or the drug war and all those issues are very important to me. And I'm not down with sticking it to the lower classes by raising the retirement age to 70 and cutting Medicare, Social Security, and veterans' benefits. It would be nice to ask Howard Dean face to face what *exactly* he plans to do about inequality in this country, reforming our welfare laws, reforming our healthcare system or how far he's willing to go in curtailing the drug war. Even more important is to ask if he's for a total repeal of the USA Patriot Act. That's a big litmus test right there: Are you down with *any* point of the Patriot Act?

You mentioned earlier the idea that we can't stay focused on this one election, that we have to look beyond it. Why?

Even if the "great savior" Howard Dean ends up in the White House, how much will he really accomplish if Tom Delay, Bill Frist, and Trent Lott are still calling the shots in Congress? My guess is that if a good clump of Greens got elected to Congress, they would likely vote with Democrats in many cases and that would prove to be a working majority. The corporate DLC Democrats couldn't always play Republican because they'd lose their working majority without the Greens . . . There are all sorts of possibilities of "wagging the dog" here, both at the national and local level. ©

Go vote, punk at www.punkvoter.org

"sneak-and-peak" provision which allows law enforcement to delay notifying people that their homes or workplaces have been searched. Numerous Congressmen, including the Republican Chairman of the House Judiciary Committee, have complained that the Justice Department has not been forthcoming in providing information on how the Justice Department is wielding its broad new powers to

monitor people and organizations that are not suspected of any wrongdoing. Over 150 municipalities and three states have passed resolutions condemning the law."

► READ MORE AT WWW.CCR-NY.ORG

No Child Left Behind?

Stan Karp, editor of *Rethinking Schools*, warns that the 1100-page Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 2001, passed a few months

after the 9/11 attacks, "Essentially . . . codifies at the national level policies that have already wreaked havoc at the state level: punitive high stakes testing, the use of bureaucratic monitoring as the engine of school reform, and 'accountability' schemes that set up schools to fail and then use that failure to justify disinvestment and privatization."

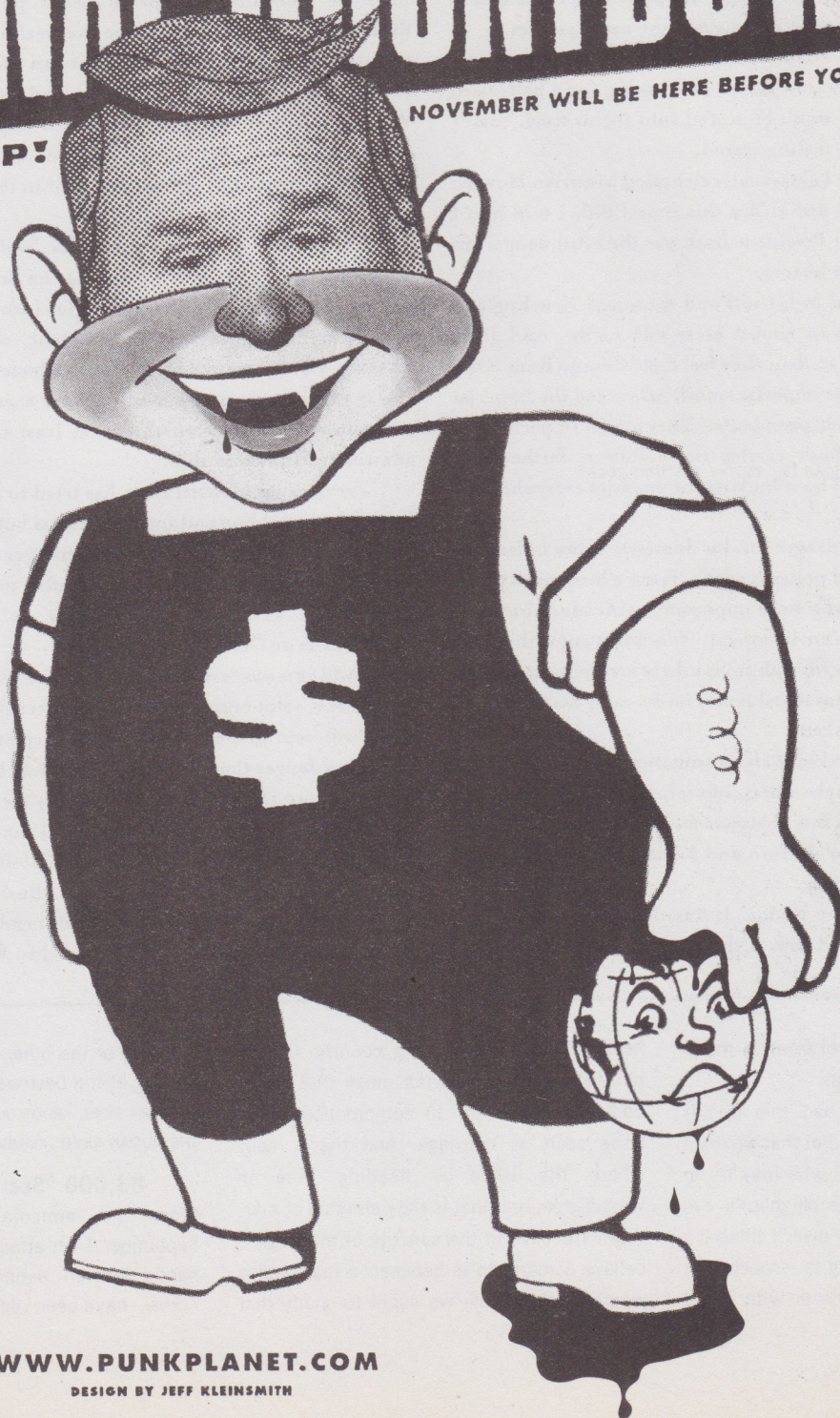
► READ MORE AT WWW.RETHINKINGSCHOOLS.ORG

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WWW.PUNKPLANET.COM
DESIGN BY JEFF KLEINSMITH

VOTING FOR THE LESSER EVIL: Howard Zinn swallows his pride

During the last presidential election, I was on my way to the Middle East. Before I left, I did something I'd only done twice before: I voted. I filled out the absentee ballot with a #2 pencil on the floor of an O'Hare airport terminal, sealed it, and dropped it in a nearby mailbox.

BY JEFF GUNTZEL

My guy lost—but you probably could have figured that out. But it felt good (the voting, not the losing). I didn't need Al Qaeda to know that George W Bush was a uniquely frightening man. And I didn't need Ralph Nader to know that Al Gore was a dud. Choosing Nader was easy for me. I would not darken the circle next to a candidate that I did not believe in, whatever the consequences.

Until recently, I defended my decision. But at the same time that I was insisting that I wasn't scared into voting for a half-assed Democrat in 2000 and I won't be scared into it this time, something happened: I started feeling scared.

I wish I could say that I always call celebrated historian Howard Zinn when I get scared—I don't. But this time I did. I told him I was starting to believe that President Bush was the most dangerous president in United States history.

"It's true," he replied in his soft and measured New England drawl. "In fact I say that in almost every talk I give. And I get applause. People respond to that; they feel that. George Bush is the most dangerous because his imperial ambitions exceed the imperial ambitions of all of the other presidents. They are all imperialists—including Clinton—but Bush carries the ambition farther and moves into war faster. And he is looking for enemies everywhere."

Zinn wasn't finished.

"His foreign policy is dangerous, his domestic policy is dangerous, and his environmental policy is ruinous. From a long-term point of view, there may be nothing more important in his administration than what he is doing to the environment. You might argue that with his foreign policy—whatever his ambitions—there are limits to what he can do, but with the environmental policy he *can* carry his ambitions out and he *is* carrying them out."

Howard Zinn has voted in every presidential election he could except 1972—oddly enough—when liberal, anti-war Democrat George McGovern ran. "But that was because I was in North Vietnam at the time of the election and I didn't have an absentee ballot," he explains, laughing.

In 2000, he voted for Nader. It was the "good and right" thing to do, he says. I asked him if this time around he was pre-

pared, as many are, to vote for the candidate with the best chance of beating the president.

"Yes. I hate to say it, but yes," he replied.

"That doesn't mean that I would give up on a third party movement," he adds, "but I would give up on a third party presidential candidate. This is one of those rare situations where the lesser of two evils—the difference between one evil and another—is critical enough to justify voting for the lesser evil."

Zinn has even written a speech for whomever that "lesser evil" might be. The fantasy campaign speech, published in *The Progressive*, declares: "We can choose to use the wealth of our nation and the talents of our people for war, or we can use that wealth and talent to better the lives of men, women, and children in this country. We can continue being the target of anger and terrorism and indignation by the rest of the world, or we can be a model of what a good society should be like, peaceful in the world, prosperous at home.

"The choice," the speech concludes, "will come in the ballot box."

That said, Zinn still insists that he doesn't "think that people should throw all of their energies into the electoral arena. I think that it will be very important, whomever is elected—whether a conservative Democrat is elected or Bush is re-elected—it will be very important to have a growing movement out there in the country which can at least try to limit what these administrations may do."

For decades Howard Zinn has tried to steer progressive hopes out of the ballot box and into the streets but in 2004, the 81 year-old activist and historian is urging a merger: "For 30 seconds, you swallow your pride. But before and after the voting booth you are a relentless critic of our foreign policy—whether it's the Republicans or Democrats who urge it.

"And you *must* have a movement," he continues, "that makes it clear that it's not enough to elect an alternative to Bush. The policies Bush represented *should not* be perpetuated by a Democrat. There is a danger that people will be lulled, but that's the job of the movement—to try to make sure that they are not.

"Whoever the president is, we need a movement. Even Reagan was subject to some kind of recognition of what was out there in the country and Nixon certainly was too. Bush seems impervious to that and yet, if he is re-elected, we will need a movement.

"As difficult as it may be," Zinn adds. ©

"I believe marriage is between a man and a woman."

Last year President Bush had this to say about matrimony: "I am mindful that we're all sinners, and I caution those who may try to take the speck out of their neighbor's eye when they got a log in their own. I think it's very important for our society to respect each individual, to welcome those with good

hearts, to be a welcoming country. On the other hand, that does not mean that somebody like me needs to compromise on an issue such as marriage. And that's really where the issue is heading here in Washington, and that is the definition of marriage. I believe in the sanctity of marriage. I believe a marriage is between a man and a woman. And I think we ought to codify that

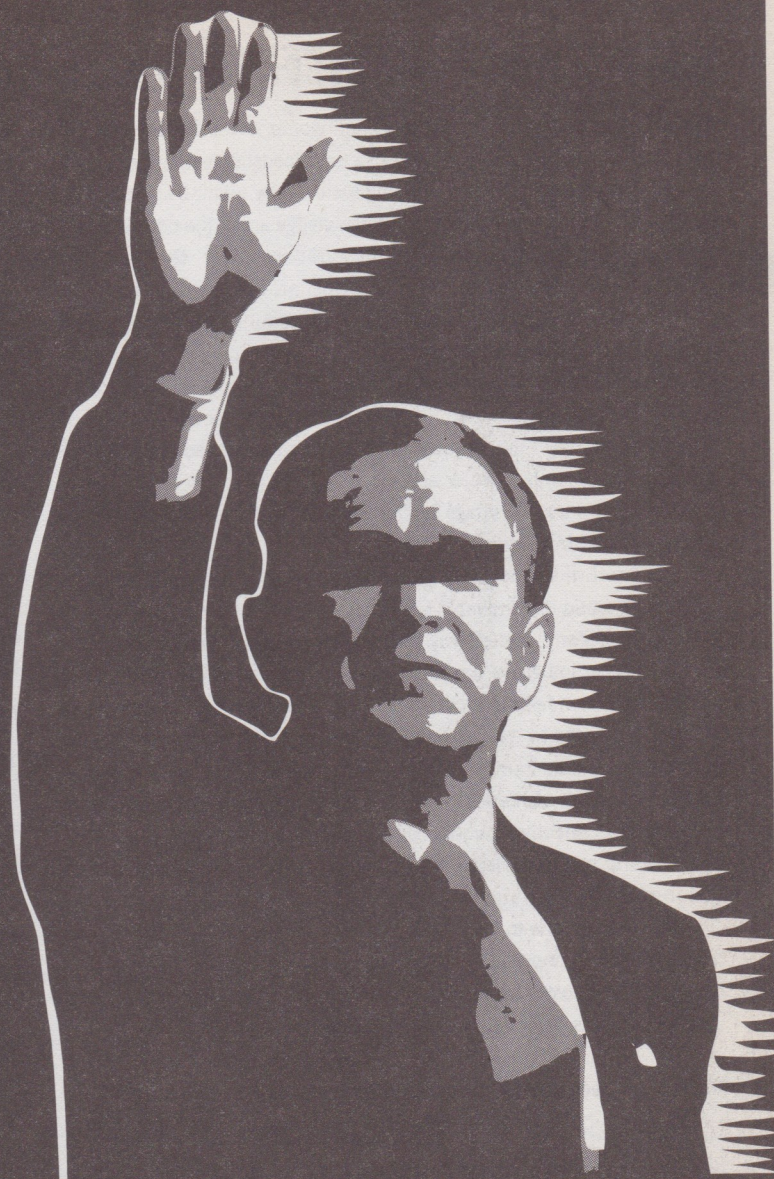
one way or the other. And we've got lawyers looking at the best way to do that."

► LEARN MORE ABOUT BUSH'S ANTI-GAY POLICIES AT THE HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN: WWW.HRC.ORG

83,000 "Security Concerns"

Since the immediate aftermath of the September 11th attacks, men from predominantly Muslim nations—as well as North Korea—have been required to "register" with

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behind the
BEAST
behind the
BEAST?



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OOPS I DID IT AGAIN: Political poster artist Robbie Conal

BY KARI LYDERSEN

They say a picture is worth a thousand words. Given the painstakingly gory detail in Robbie Conal's posters—bloodshot leering eyes, loose skin covering greedy jowls, ugly rotting teeth—they might be worth twice that many. Regardless of your level of knowledge about the policies of the

Republican administrations over the last two decades, it is impossible not to have a visceral reaction on seeing Conal's images of bloated, powerful men dripping greed, deceitfulness, and absurdity.

Guerrilla artist Robbie Conal says art plays no role in the electoral process, but that doesn't stop him from making our elected officials and their administrations the frequent targets of his caustic, sometimes morbid, and often hilarious poster art.

Take his image of image of Donald Rumsfeld and Dick Cheney as Doctor Evil and Mini-Me.

"Doctor Evil and Mini-Me don't hold a candle to these guys in terms of planning world domination," Conal says.

Conal doesn't necessarily see himself or his work as an active part of the campaign to unseat Bush—perhaps his cynicism and wit prevent him from feeling inclined to engage in the electoral process at all. But it is safe to say that his work, which is featured in various mainstream media outlets like the *Washington Post* and the *Wall Street Journal* as well as alternative outlets, plays a significant role in shaping the collective public consciousness and opinion about our political and capitalist leaders in general—and the Bush administration in particular.

Still holding true to the illegal, midnight-raid poster that has been his hallmark for almost 20 years, Conal continues to produce uncompromising political poster work. While other political poster artists have come up since, Conal's work continues to stand apart.

How do you feel about Mr. Bush and his chances for re-election?

He is the most dangerous man on the planet. He can be beaten if his administration's non-plans for the un-reconstruction of Iraq and Afghanistan stay on their non-course and the economic phantom recovery remains invisible.

Do you see yourself and your work as an active part of the movement to prevent Bush from being re-elected?

I'm just throwing my non-sanctioned two cents into the public dialogue—I don't really think of it as part of a movement, but I'd like it to be.

What is one of your recent war-related posters and what kind of feedback have you gotten from it?

I did a poster that was die-cut in the shape of a flower called "Oops, I Did It Again." I did it with [the activist group] Code Pink. It's basically "Bomb the Shit Out of Iraq II." In the flower petals are all the guys who were around for Bomb the Shit Out of Iraq I: Cheney, Wolfowitz, Pearl. It's pretty, it's pink, it's Britney. ¶ I also came off my book tour to do an Arnold Schwarzenegger poster in California. I pulled a couple of all-nighters, we banged together this poster, and we put up about 1,200 in one night with 150 people. We met at this all-night deli—we took over the place—I don't even know where all these people came from! I was overwhelmed, I had to go back to my studio in the middle of the night and crack open some more boxes of posters. Arnold's one of our own in California, he's this body builder who's acting like a cyborg and is paid \$20 million a movie to save the world. He's very contentious and polarizing. We had drunken frat boys following us around taking them down.

Are people especially hungry for art as a form of dissent right now?

They're looking for outlets to express themselves. Whether it's musically or in theater like *The Exonerated*, alternative culture producers are addressing these issues more than in the past. Stencils are proliferating like crazy. Everywhere I go people are shoving stencils at me, talking stencils. It's kind of bubbling up everywhere I went. I'm an old guy; to see the kids just pumping like that makes me feel a little better.

With your late-night poster runs, have you felt any heat in the post-September 11 crackdowns on dissent?

We always have legal trouble. I got arrested in New York in March [for putting up posters]. Plainclothes cops jumped out of taxi cabs and busted a few of us for putting up Ghandi and Martin Luther King posters, which is ironic considering the terrorists that we are and that they were.

What do you have planned in the near future?

I've been trying to retire. But shit keeps happening—and also I'm addicted to the midnight raid. I'm going to take a rest over the holidays and then crank up for the election. After all, I have Condoleeza Rice burning a hole in my pocket. ☺

Conal's new work is collected in *Artburn* from Akashic Books: www.akashicbooks.com

the Department of Homeland Security, where they were interviewed, fingerprinted, and photographed.

That program was shut down—for the most part—in December 2003: Still, According to the *Chicago Tribune*, "The domestic registration program . . . resulted in more than 83,000 foreign men in the US being labeled 'high national security concerns' because of their

nationalities"

It "also led to deportation proceedings against almost 14,000 of the men. Many of them had overstayed visas or ignored previous deportation orders.

"But"—and here's the rub—"the mandate, unveiled in June 2002 by Atty. Gen. John Ashcroft as a counterterrorism initiative, did not produce terrorism charges against anyone."

► FOR MORE, GO TO THE COUNCIL ON AMERICAN-ISLAMIC RELATIONS: WWW.CAIR-NET.ORG

Not Another International Treaty...

According to the *New York Times*, "In his first six months in office, President Bush . . . abandoned a treaty on fighting global warming, rejected protocols enforcing a ban on germ warfare, demanded amendments to an accord on illegal sales of small arms, threatened to skip

FINAL COUNTDOWN 14 / DANIEL SINKER



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PIRATE SIGNAL INTERNATIONAL

BARRY GOLDWATER LIVES: Student Activist Jackie Bray

Jackie Bray, a history major at the University of Michigan, thinks a lot about the future. Five minutes in conversation with her and you feel like you've been wired into a get out the vote rally. She's good at inspiring. She's even better at organizing.

BY JEFF GUNTZEL

Last Summer while the Supreme Court was preparing to hear a case about affirmative action on the University of Michigan campus—a case that would be a huge victory for proponents of affirmative action—Bray, along with a broad coalition of activists and advocacy groups, was organizing rallies and teach-ins and buses to shuttle Michigan students to the Capital for a press conference and, hopefully, a victory party.

Bray has also served on the national board of the successful United Students Against Sweatshops campaign. The list goes on.

Lately, she's been thinking a lot about Barry Goldwater. Remember him? Maybe not. He was the guy who ran against Lyndon Johnson for president in 1964. Johnson won. Goldwater lost . . . miserably.

However, says Jackie Bray, "All of the people who are pushing the Republican Party to the right and running our country today were in their mid-20s in 1964 and they came in as young activists for Goldwater.

"Goldwater lost," she says without a pause—she never pauses—"but those people won. They're running our country right now."

Bray wants to win it back. And she's pushing what she calls a "win-win" electoral strategy for 2004.

"As a progressive movement we have a real responsibility—right now in particular—to have an organizing strategy," Bray says, "that sees to it that even if our guy loses in 2004, the movement wins.

"There can't be any easy fixes," she continues. "You can't just register 10,000 students to vote, turn out half of them at the polls, and think you're doing a good job. We've got to use this important moment to *build*. It means seeing beyond getting your candidate elected as your end goal."

What that means, says Bray, is that "we've got to get *strategic*. We've got to get *smart*. But I think most of all we've got to *invest in each other*."

Jackie Bray is good at rally cries. But she has a knack for the nuts and bolts as well:

"One of my mentors has lived and worked in Detroit for a very long time. I was pontificating one day on how we had to take over and she turned to me and said, 'Jackie, what would you do with sewage in Detroit?' And I looked at her and I cracked up and said, 'What do you *mean* what would I do with sewage in Detroit?' And she said, 'Jackie you really want to take over? Get yourself pre-

pared. You're not taking yourself seriously if you don't know what you would do with these things.'"

Bray applies that same pragmatism to organizing because, she believes, it's not just about doing it, but doing it *right*.

"Rather than saying I need 50 people to do door-knocking in this neighborhood on Sunday," she explains, "I sit down and I say, *these* are the 50 people I want to do this. And of those 50 I'm going to call 10 of them and we're gonna get dinner beforehand. And I'm gonna see how they're doing. And then afterwards 10 of them are gonna come over to my house and we're gonna have a beer and watch television."

That level of detail may seem ridiculous. Bray is way ahead of you: "I *know* that seems ridiculous," she admits, "but this is about re-imagining and rebuilding a community around this type of work. When I just say I want numbers, *that's* ridiculous. Numbers don't build a movement. Relationships build a movement."

But, as anyone who has worked in anything you could call "a movement" knows, relationships can be destroyed as much as they can be fostered. Bray knows that too. She says that building diverse coalitions around affirmative action on the University of Michigan campus has gotten her over any naiveté and straight on to getting work done.

"At the end of the day it comes down to a commitment—time and again—to work on yourself 24/7 and to not leave the damn table," she says. "The problem is we leave the table so quickly."

Bray knows that not leaving that table takes work. But she's also seen that work pay off in her organizing for the affirmative action case. "There was this absolute belief amongst a few leaders who said 'We are going to get our communities in this room and keep them here,'" she says, remembering the time surrounding the case. "There was this thing of, well, I'm pissed off at you and I could get up and leave, but then we're going to lose. And it was big enough that it kept us at the table.

"I think students and other people need to start seeing this upcoming election as *that* big," she adds.

To Jackie Bray the coming election is that big. But what lies beyond is bigger: "I've got a campus of 39,000. Something like two-thirds of us vote Democratic every single time. Okay, out of that I want to get 1,000 students here door-knocking. And of *that* thousand I want 500 to be a little bit more engaged. And of that 500 I want 250 of them to decide that this is what they are doing for the rest of their lives. *That* should be my goal as a progressive leader. And if that's my goal, I'm going to win that election. Even if my candidate loses, I totally win." ©

an international conference on racism, and vowed to withdraw from a landmark pact limiting ballistic missile defenses."

President Bush has made a sport of rejecting treaties. Writing about the objections of the Bush administration over the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women in 2002, columnist Chrisopher Brauchli wrote: "The

most recent convention finds itself in distinguished company of treaties rejected by Mr. Bush including the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child, his unilateral withdrawal from the Anti-Ballistic Missile treaty, his unwillingness to commit the United States to the Ottawa Convention on Land Mines . . . and his withdrawal of a signature from the agreement creating the International Criminal Court

(signed by former president Bill Clinton on behalf of everyone except, it turned out, George W Bush)."

► FOR MORE, VISIT THE CENTER FOR CONSTITUTIONAL RIGHTS: WWW.CCR-NY.ORG

Bah! The Environment is for the Birds.

Last year, the League of Conservation Voters released a 30-page "report card" on the Bush administration's performance on environmental



OLD SCHOOL: '60s activist Carl Davidson hits the streets

Stick around long enough on the political left and you get associated with lots of acronyms. Carl Davidson, once a vice-president of SDS (Students for a Democratic Society) in the mid-'60s, is one of those people. His latest endeavor, with a few other notable '60s figures, is CAWI, Chicagoans Against War and Injustice.

BY AARON SARVER

Focused on defeating Bush in 2004, CAWI, together with Operation Push and activists from the late, great hero Harold Washington's Chicago mayoral campaign, has launched a project called Peace and Justice Voters 2004. They have trained more than 400 deputy registrars and registered several thousand new voters. Certain that Illinois is a safe state for the Democratic nominee, Davidson says the group will travel to Iowa and Michigan—likely battleground states—to go door-to-door in what Davidson calls “regime change summer.”

I recently saw you and another former SDS member, Bill Ayers, talk after a screening of a documentary film about SDS. I was surprised that the mostly 30-and-under crowd were focused on the 2004 election and questions about the future, not '60s nostalgia and mythmaking. Are you surprised by younger people's willingness to participate in voter registration drives and do the dirty work that needs to be done?

I think there is a new awakening going on. My niece goes to a little state college in Pennsylvania. They brought me there and the place was packed—about 300 students hanging from the rafters. I talked about the '60s, but I talked a lot about how the struggle continues. The students just wanted to know, “Where do we go? Who do we fight? What do we do?” [laughs] They were very interested in defining a new politics for their time. That's important. I said, “Look, all this stuff about the '60s is fine, you can learn things from it. But when all is said and done, you're a new generation.”

What are the lessons you can draw from that time that apply to now?

I think people need a certain amount of audacity, which is one thing SDS always had. The worst thing you can do is not do anything. Get out there and do things. Don't worry too much about making mistakes—you can always correct mistakes. It's important to note that the anti-war movement in the '60s was very organized. It took a while to make that happen. There were hundreds of local committees of all sorts. A great deal of organization went into building that force and a crucial role was played by soldiers returning from Vietnam. A certain amount of outreach has to be done to military families; people have to remain open to them. The anti-war move-

ment needs to avoid getting locked up into what I would call a “left bloc” of ideological purism. We can spark a certain amount of activity, but if we are going to bring about change, we really need to mobilize a broad number of people who don't necessarily agree with us in detail. If we are going to bring down Bush, it is going to be by backing a candidate who represents the left and the center.

You have been organizing for a long time. How do you think the Internet is changing things?

The Internet changes everything. In a week we would never have been able to get a thousand people downtown for an anti-war demonstration if it hadn't been for the Internet. It's like asking people in 1940, “Do you think you could organize a trade union without a telephone?” We need these tools; any organization that doesn't have them is going to get left in the dust. That doesn't mean that the Internet alone is going to do it—politics is still personal, still face-to-face. What's most important about the Internet is that everyone is a consumer and a producer. That's what makes it inherently biased towards participatory democracy.

In a document on your website titled Moving From Protest to Politics: Defeating the Bush Regime in 2004 you wrote, “While focused on 2004, a committee could also have a longer range perspective for building an independent political organization.” What are your ideas for beyond 2004?

I'm of the view that in order to really make long-term progressive change we need an independent progressive politics and a political party that is going to represent that. There are some major structural changes that have to take place in terms of either the break up of the Democratic Party, or split off of it, or the emergence of a third party—or some combination of those things. But it will also take some changes in election laws to make that possible. We need to work on things like instant runoff voting and proportional representation. In the meantime nothing can be done unless we have something on the ground. It doesn't do any good at all to talk about third party politics or even reforming the Democratic Party if we don't have any clout, any organization to do that with. My long range perspective on this thing is focused on base-building and party-building, I'm not really interested in building the Democratic Party even though I will vote Democratic this election, mainly as a way to defeat Bush. ©

Chicagoans Against War and Injustice is online at: www.noiraqwar-chicago.org

issues. The president got an F.

“President Bush is well on his way to compiling the worst environmental record of any president in the history of our nation,” wrote LCV President Deb Callahan. “Bush's dismal report card is dominated by a disturbing trend: time after time, Bush favors corporate interests over the public's interest in a clean, safe and healthy environment. Under the Bush

administration, corporate polluters have been allowed to write the laws.”

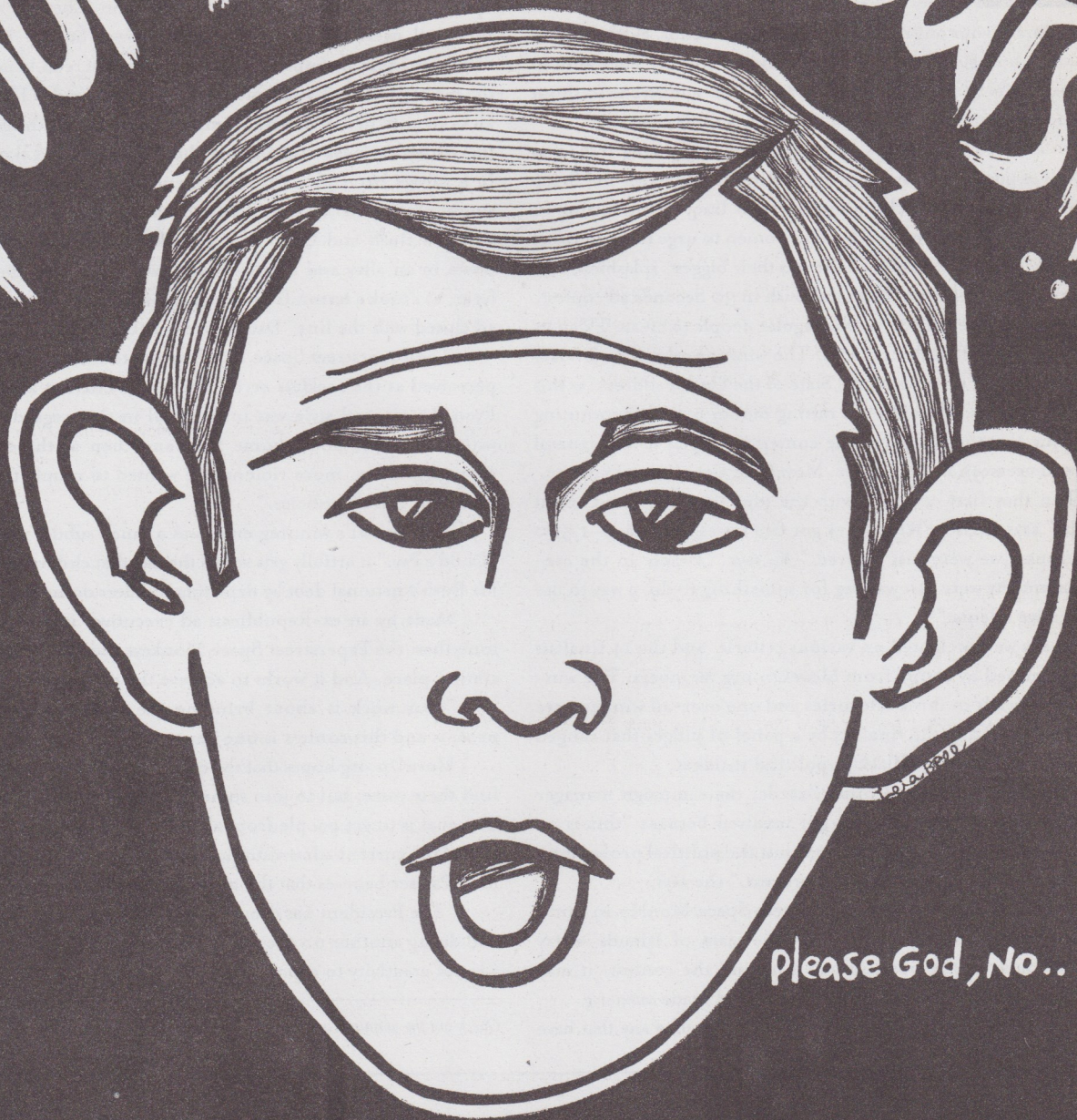
According to the League, “Since taking office, Bush has assaulted environmental protections on all fronts, including air, water, land and wildlife. In particular, the Bush administration has attacked, weakened or undermined laws providing clean air, clean water, and toxic waste cleanups. Primary beneficiaries of these

actions have been timber, mining, oil and gas, and real estate development companies.

“The Bush administration has waged this campaign through funding cuts, arcane procedural methods, and deceptive rhetoric to advance its anti-environment, pro-corporate agenda.

“The Bush administration has cut enforcement for key environmental programs through steadily slashing budgets. Consequently, envi-

Four More Years!!



Please God, No...

November will be here Soon
The time to defeat Bush is Now.

The Final Countdown

www.punkplanet.com

DISSIDENCE IS PATRIOTIC: MoveOn's Bush in 30 Seconds Contest

MoveOn.org knows you're angry. Angry about the war in Iraq, tax cuts that favor the rich, sweetheart deals for Halliburton, and secret meetings with energy companies. MoveOn.org also knows that you're angry about the Patriot Act and the results of the 2000 election. More importantly, MoveOn.org wants to help you express this anger. They want you to embrace your anger, hug it, nurture it, feed it, clothe it, give it love and a home, a place to go to rest and re-charge. They want to dress it up in its Sunday best, and send it off on a mission: to shout a big "fuck you" to the Bush administration and its cronies.

BY BEN TANZER

The innovative website is developing and organizing this in as many ways as possible, from electronic petitions calling for the firing of Donald Rumsfeld and changing course in Iraq, to mobilizing its members to call their congressmen and women to urge them to reject the Bush spending bill. And then there is their biggest, splashiest, and most controversial effort to date: the Bush in 30 Seconds ad contest.

The goal of the contest was for regular people to create TV spots critical of President Bush's policies. The winning ad ran in January during the week of the president's State of the Union address (as this issue went to press, MoveOn was raising money to run the winning spot during the Super Bowl). The contest was open to the general public and overseen by Eli Pariser, MoveOn's Campaigns Director.

When they first came up with the idea they "expected about 300 ads," says Pariser. When they got five times that many—1,500 submissions—"we were just floored," he says. "People in the creative community were just waiting for something to do, a way to use their creative talents."

The ads were weighted on various criteria and the 14 finalists were determined by voting from MoveOn.org members. The winning commercials in three categories and one over-all winner were selected from among the finalists by a panel of judges that ranged from celebrities like Jack Black to political insiders.

One of the latter was Donna Brazile, the campaign manager for Gore/Lieberman 2000. She got involved because "this is an opportunity [for] regular people—not just the political professionals—to have a say in our democratic process," she says.

Brazile may not have had Paperstreet Space Monkey in mind when she signed up for the job. But the team of friends' entry embodies much of the populist spirit behind the contest: it may not be good, but people got off their asses and made *something*.

"We are part of a generation that is entirely unlike any that have

come before it," they say. "Our first priority is not keeping the capitalist machine running. We are the first generation to hold onto our toys, our PlayStations, after high school. But we can still participate in politics."

The entry, by Ben Fisher, Chad Halliday, and Ben Halliday—Paperstreet Space Monkey's earth names—"Thank You America," opens with President Bush, Vice President Cheney, and Barbara Bush—all oversized heads on normal-sized bodies—having a ho-down on a porch. Superimposed across the screen beneath them is the message "Thank you America, you understand." Then the music kicks in as scores of different images splash across the screen. One image depicts Bush and Cheney, both shirtless and skinny, playing in a garage band with Attorney General John Ashcroft on drums singing "our polls and NASDAQ, both looking grim . . ." The scene shifts to Bush and Cheney in suits kicking a homeless man lying down in an alley and then running away as we hear the end of the lyric ". . . took a lesson from my daddy and bombed a Muslim." The ad closed with the line "Dissidence is Patriotic."

The Paperstreet Space Monkeys wanted "to exaggerate what we perceived as the reckless arrogance of the current administration. Even the musical style was intentional in that regard. It starts off with a country, down-home feel, and then at the end becomes more aggressive, more violent. We wanted to mimic the two-faced nature of Bush's policies."

The contest's winning entry was a much subtler affair. Entitled "Child's Pay," it artfully gets across the fact that children will be paying for Bush's national debt by depicting toddlers doing manual labor.

Made by an ex-Republican ad executive, it strikes a different tone than the Paperstreet Space Monkeys did, but it comes from a similar place. And it works to achieve the same goal.

"Our work is about bringing the public into the political process and this contest is one way to do that," says Pariser.

MoveOn.org hopes that the contest will allow people to not only find their voice, but to join something larger than this one project. The goal is to get people from all walks of life to question the policies of the current administration and engage them in electoral politics. Pariser believes that the more people get involved, the better.

"The President has done an incredible job of saying one thing and doing another on the policy front," he says. "It's going to take a lot of creativity to expose that." ☺

Check out the winning commercials at www.bushin30seconds.org

ronmental laws that should otherwise be enforced by the Bush administration lie dormant on the books for lack of funding.

"The administration has proposed regulatory changes, for example, to weaken a significant provision of the Clean Air Act called 'new source review,' which currently requires older, more polluting industrial plants to upgrade pollution controls when they renovate or expand in such a

way that increases emissions of pollutants.

"Meanwhile, fraudulently named legislation has become the norm. In 2002, Bush proposed the 'Clear Skies' initiative, which would weaken public health protections of the current Clean Air Act, while replacing them with insufficient standards and actually increasing toxic emissions like mercury and sulfur. Another initiative, the so-called 'Healthy Forests' proposal, would open up

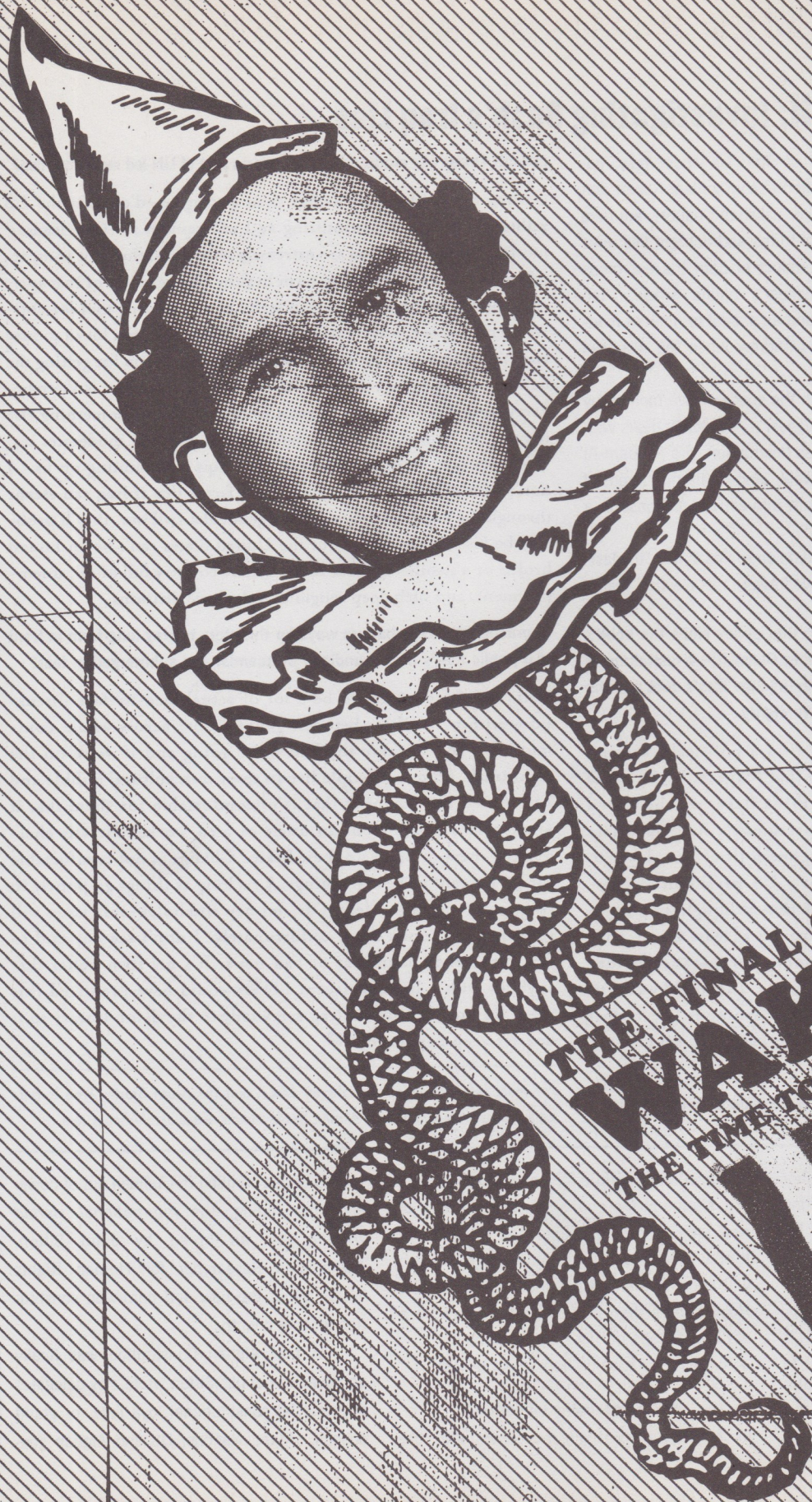
20 million acres of national forests to logging and waive environmental laws."

► FOR MORE ON BUSH AND THE ENVIRONMENT, VISIT WWW.BUSHGREENWATCH.ORG

Moon Cottages First, Jobs Later

In January, President Bush told Americans that we might soon be living on the moon.

"On the same day," writes Mark Weisbrot, Co-Director of the Center for Economic and



THE FINAL COUNTDOWN
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GIMME SOME TRUTH: Investigating Bush's Iraq Lies

Books like *The Five Biggest Lies Bush Told Us About Iraq*, co-authored by the father-son team of Altnet.com writers Robert and Christopher Scheer and Altnet senior editor Lakshmi Chaudry, are here to keep us mindful of this past year of half-truths and outright lies. *Five*

BY RON NACHMANN

Biggest . . . is the product of both the enormous response to Chris Scheer's online article, "Ten

Appalling Lies We Were Told About Iraq," and an appeal to Altnet readers for support—an appeal that the site withdrew when the response proved overwhelming.

Written in six weeks and published in the space of two months by Seven Stories Press/Akashic Books, *Five Biggest* . . . cogently deals with the boogeyman threats of weapons of mass destruction, the Saddam-Al Qaeda link, the myths of war-as-cakewalk, and militarily imposed democracy. It's a prime example of in-depth info-activist response in a time of crisis.

I spoke with Chris Scheer to get an update on events in Iraq, the lasting implications of the war, and how to move forward this election year.

I'd like your read on two developments in Iraq policy since the book's been published: Bush's appointment of James Baker III—a containment hawk who initially opposed the invasion—to manage Iraq's debt and the summer '04 deadline to establish Iraqi sovereignty.

Both reveal some thrashing about to find a politically acceptable outcome for the occupation now that Plans A, B, C, and D have flopped. Some regional experts think Baker will be tasked with more than debt management—presumably he'll facilitate the handover of some security responsibilities for Iraq to international forces before next year's US presidential election. The White House seems to think that although we plan to leave over 100,000 troops in Iraq through at least 2006, they need to at least bring a few guys home for parades before November. Before that can happen, though, the world wants to have at least a nominally independent government it can deal with—hence, the summer deadline to elect, through caucuses, a new Iraq government.

How should we change the current Iraq policy? Conditional or unconditional

Policy Research in Washington DC, "the Labor Department surprised everyone by reporting that only 1,000 new jobs had been gained for the month of December. It was far below expectations (the experts predicted 150,000) and shocked the financial markets.

"More importantly," writes Weisbrot, "it was a pointed reminder that we were still living with a 'job loss' recovery: 25 months after the official end of our last recession, the economy is still down 776,000 jobs. It's an

unprecedented failure for an economic recovery. Normally the economy gains millions of new jobs in the years following a recession. It now seems very likely that George W Bush will become the first president since Herbert Hoover more than 70 years ago to rack up a net loss of jobs during his presidency."

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How Liberated is Liberated?

In January, more than two years after the

pullout? Drastically reduced US presence as part of UN-led reconstruction?

Getting out is obviously harder than getting in—d'oh! Yet the US military presence is destabilizing and will remain so. Our leaders' motives for being in Iraq are extremely selfish and thus not compatible with the mid- and long-term healthy regeneration of that society. And the occupation is a wonderful new recruiting tool for anti-Western Islamic fundamentalist groups. Also, it costs a lot of money and Americans—and even more Iraqis—are dying. I'm for getting the hell out, since I think the basic model for this quagmire is Vietnam. Every time they think they've got a handle on things, something else is going to blow up in the occupiers' face. A lot of moderates say, "Well, we can't leave now because the Iraqis are counting on us." I don't want to seem callous, but the sad fact is that if Iraq can escape through the next 10 years without a genocidal civil war, they'll probably be beating the odds. But the United States can't be an honest broker or a stabilizing force in an Islamic country full of oil, unemployment, and such deep religious and ethnic divisions.

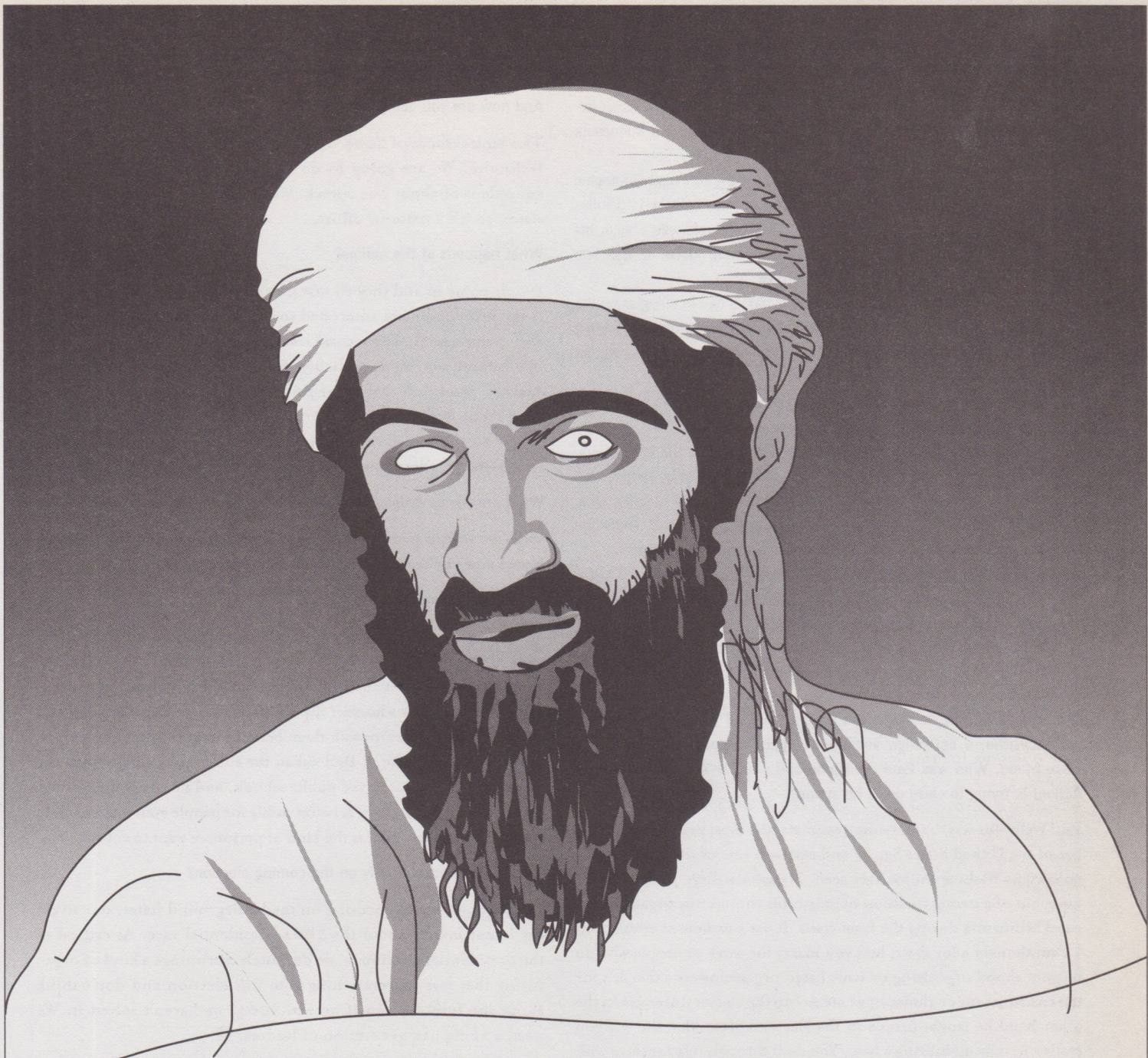
In practical terms, what are ways for this story to stay long-term in front of a public that's both jaundiced by scandal and submerged in fear?

Well, clearly there has to be a lot of actual face-to-face discussion—within families, between generations, across whole communities—about where the hell we're going and if we're on the right track. So many people live in their own cultural bubble and have tuned out anything that is uncomfortable for them that it might take a daughter or an uncle or a co-worker directly challenging them to open up their brain. Change is not comfortable for 95 percent of human beings. ¶ As long as things go poorly in Iraq—car bombings, dead GIs, money sinkholes—this issue will remain a live topic. And, unfortunately, I don't see any end to this very steady drumbeat of bad news. It's my firm belief that anybody with a halfway decent library could have predicted this mess. So now we have to drag everybody to the damn library so it doesn't keep happening! ☺

For more information on *Five Biggest Lies*...visit the Seven Stories Press website www.sevenstories.com and the Akashic Books website www.akashicbooks.com

United States bombed the Taliban out of power and into hiding, the *International Herald Tribune* ran an op-ed by John Sifton, Afghanistan Researcher for Human Rights Watch about the new and hard-won constitution for that country.

"A new Afghan Constitution was finally approved in Kabul," Sifton wrote, "by delegates at a special constitutional loya jirga, or grand council. United Nations, US and Afghan gov-



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GEORGE W BUSH

BUILDING A NEW GENERATION OF LEADERS: Wellstone Action!

Paul Wellstone was a giant. He was not perfect—nobody is, *especially* giants—but the three-term United States Senator from Minnesota did politics and elections with constant courage and innovation.

I was driving into Minneapolis from Chicago the day his twin-engine private plane went down in freezing rain 175 miles north of Minneapolis. Wellstone, his wife Sheila, his daughter Marcia, and three campaign workers were killed. It was two weeks from election day, 2002. He was ahead.

On my car radio, I listened to endless hours of call-in eulogies on the local public radio station. It was not the familiar political players reading obligatory statements dryly from their DC offices, it was regular Minnesotans. And Minnesota was grieving.

Today there exists a tribute to Paul Wellstone's life and work more meaningful than this back-bumper rhetorical wrangling.

"After Paul died," says Pam Costain, a close friend of the late senator, "we knew that there was a Wellstone model that needed to be passed on."

With that in mind, some of the Wellstone family's closest associates, along with Paul and Sheila's two surviving sons, launched Wellstone Action! (apparently they're fans of the exclamation point up north).

More than a year later, the non-partisan organization boasts 27,000 members. Its election year calendar is crowded with trainings for activists, campaign workers, and prospective candidates.

Pam Costain is the Director of Education and Advocacy for Wellstone Action!. I spoke with her from her office in St. Paul, Minnesota.

Over the past three decades, you have been Paul Wellstone's student, his babysitter, a campaign volunteer, a paid campaign staffer, and a close friend. Who was Paul Wellstone and what is the fight Wellstone Action! is trying to carry on in his name?

Paul Wellstone was, by everyone's estimate, the most progressive member of the United States Senate and certainly one of the most unique politicians Washington has ever seen. He was a college professor who came out of a strong tradition of grassroots community organizing in rural Minnesota during the farm crisis. It was a unique combination. ¶ Paul thought a lot about how you marry the work of people who do neighborhood organizing or issue based organizing—whether it's for the environment or choice or whatever—to the electoral arena. On the other hand he taught people in the electoral arena that the way you really win is by mobilizing a base. You do it through relationships with people. That's the tradition that we are trying to uphold.

ernment officials quickly hailed the agreement as an historic milestone—an inspiring story of Afghans overcoming years of political chaos and war to charter a new government.

"There is cause for celebration," he continued. "That Afghanistan's political dynamics are being settled with words, instead of guns, is a welcome contrast with the country's recent past. The charter's prohibition against sexual discrimination is a victory for Afghan women,

so recently oppressed by the Taliban.

"Behind these achievements, however, lies a sordid tale about the process itself, involving vote-buying, death threats and naked power politics. A deeper view of the Constitution itself reveals a litany of missed opportunities and poorly crafted compromises. In short, the process was ugly."

Sifton goes on—delegates who were also known war criminals, independent candidates who were too afraid to run.

And how are you doing it?

The central focus of 2004 is going to be the training camps: Camp Wellstone. We are going to do close to 50 camps this year, the equivalent of about one a week. We're going to be in probably 20 states, so it's a national effort.

What happens at the camps?

People come in and they choose one of three tracks. The first track is for people who are interested in being candidates at some point and at some level. The second track is for people who want to work in electoral campaigns explicitly. And the third we call the "Citizen Activist" track and that is for people who might work in the electoral arena but whose main work is with community organizations. We do a lot of hands-on exercises. It's not just sitting and listening to somebody telling you why it's important to do voter registration.

What are the ambitions for the people who take the candidate track?

Well, we've had people who are interested everything from school board and city council to serious congressional people.

And what are you teaching them?

We say that elections never end—we are *very* explicit about that. The day after an election, a progressive needs to begin connecting with their community again. Whether it's the black community or the gay and lesbian community or whoever, if politicians take them for granted and don't build relationships with them between elections, they don't have a right to get that vote. ¶ Paul was in the community all the time. He was in homes, he was in the public schools, and he was at the cultural events. He worked so hard at being visible for people even when he didn't need their vote. That is the kind of person we want to cultivate.

Are you focused primarily on the coming election?

Even though we are focusing on the battleground states, our strategy is not merely about the 2004 presidential race. As critical as the presidential election is, we definitely discourage a kind of organizing that says put everything into this election and don't think about the future. Even if we win 2004, we haven't solved it. We need a whole new generation of leaders. ©

Get in on the action at: www.wellstone.org

"It didn't have to be this way," Sifton wrote, "For much of the last two years, the United States and its coalition allies have allowed Afghanistan's countryside to be dominated by the warlords, originally armed and financed by the United States to fight the Taliban.

"It's too early to be sanguine," he concludes, "Afghanistan is not out of the woods yet." ©

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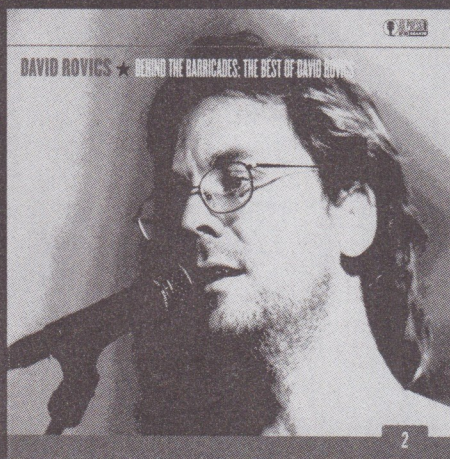
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"Ellos piensan que ellos tienen que hablar por nosotros/Pero nosotros tenemos nuestra voz, nuestra rabia" (*They think they have to speak for us/But we have our own voice, our own fury*) —The Token, "Reaccion"

Tonight's show will be the last of the summer at the Ayutla building. Also known as the Swayzee Compound, the Ayutla is an abandoned Spanish social club in Chicago's Pilsen neighborhood. A filthy flight of stairs leads up to an old ballroom that, despite its maroon and baby blue paint scheme, is so run down and neglected even the poor lighting cannot disguise it. At the end of the hall is a stage cluttered with a pile of debris—old Christmas tree lights, tables with busted legs, and a pile of filthy rugs. And clustered in front of the stage is a crowd of Latino punks.

A crowd of no more than 20 people gather in an arc around the four piece, Non-Fiction Noise. The band's drummer, Junior Delgado, begins to tap a march on his snare drum. The crowd recognizes the beat and instantly anticipating what will follow it, wait anxiously. Johnny Delgado, Junior's younger brother and Non-Fiction Noise's singer, prowls the space in front of the drum set, meeting the gaze of eyes beginning to put a name to the beat. His stride is confident and strong. Nineteen-years-old, barely five-foot-five, and slim as a blade, the young Mexican-American stops when the military march reaches its third bar. Johnny arches himself backwards, raises the microphone inches above his mouth, and howls "ASESINOS!"

Junior launches into a staggered 4/4 beat and his bandmates join in with a thrashing flurry of three chords and distortion.

The surrounding crowd explodes. Limbs flail and bodies move. "Asesinos" is a familiar song here. After all, it was penned by the now-legendary Pilsen-based hardcore band Los Crudos. Those that know the words sing along. But most everyone eyes Martin Sorrondeguy, the song's author and former singer for Los Crudos. He's visiting from California for a couple weeks and is right here, right now, stepping towards the microphone. Johnny hands Martin the mic, while simultaneously a group of bodies encircle the singer and together sing with all their might, as if their voices could blow down the decrepit walls of this abandoned building.

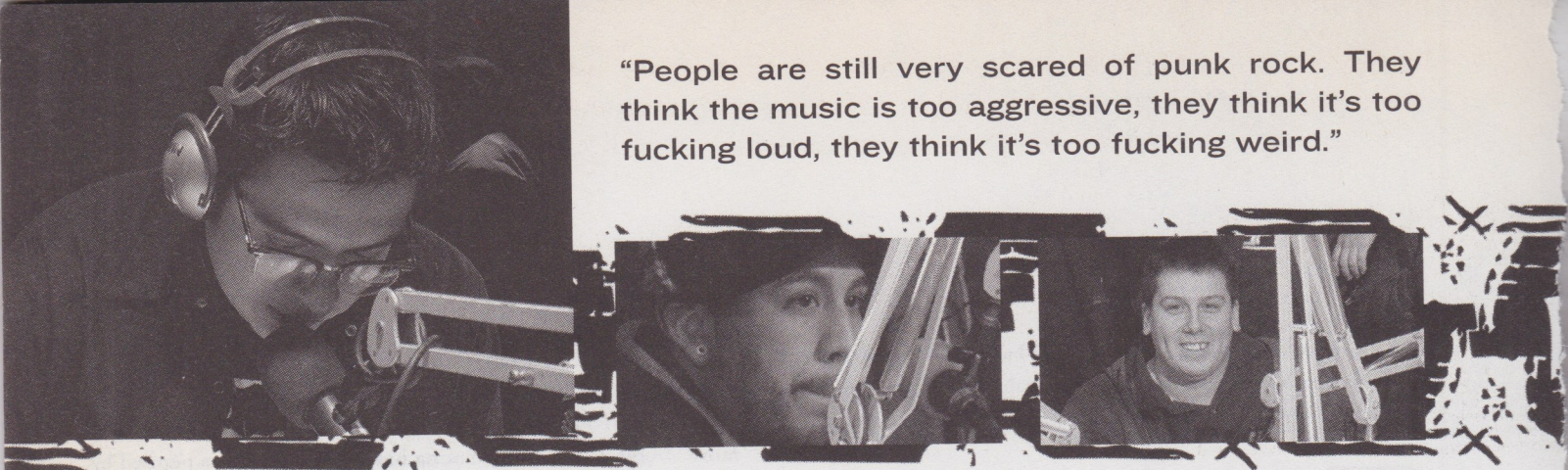
The typical image of punk rock is of a white, young, male, sneering in abhorrence at society. But on Chicago's Southside, that's not the case. The heart of Chicago's Latino and Mexican communities, the Pilsen and Little Village neighborhoods, are also ground zero to a burgeoning Latino punk scene. In this traditionally conservative, Catholic, and immigrant community, punk is one of few avenues for Pilsen and Little Village Latino youth grappling with the familiar adolescent struggle of forging personal identity. While status as first generation sons and daughters of immigrants uniquely complicates their identity, it is punk and punk rock's political message and sense of community that attracts



"I Always Thought Punk Was A White Thing"

In Chicago's Pilsen and Little Village neighborhoods a new revolution of Latino and Mexican bands are putting a new face on punk.

By George Bernard Sanchez



"People are still very scared of punk rock. They think the music is too aggressive, they think it's too fucking loud, they think it's too fucking weird."

Latino youth typically expected to be a part of hip hop or electronic dance scenes. Far below the radar of major labels—or much of the underground punk scene for that matter—Pilsen/Little Village punk is coming up, and in light of its do it yourself philosophy, they're not waiting for anyone to offer them a stage or even a helping hand; the kids are doing it on their own.

Half an hour after Non-Fiction Noise's set, Manny Gomez sits atop a torn up, vinyl restaurant booth that doubles as a couch. He holds his hand in reflection and says that the Pilsen and Little Village punk scene was a surprising find for him.

"It was real bad ass to hear all these Latinos," the 20-year-old line cook explains. "I mean, for the most part, I always thought punk was a white thing."

To get to Pilsen on the El (Chicago's public transit system), you might ride the blue line. North of downtown on nearly every line, the trains are filled with white faces; but as you move south, the presence of those white faces starts to thin, replaced almost entirely with black and brown faces. As the train pulls into the 18th street station in Pilsen, one of the immediate images along the horizon is a Catholic church towering above the brick apartments, two story homes, and cracked pavement. Along the walls of the train station are bright pastel *murales folklóricos*—Mexican folk murals. On the street, *paleteros*—ice cream men who push refrigerated carts filled with their product—move slowly. The drivers of beat-up pick-up trucks roll down the street, listening to some sort of Spanish language music—frantic *Cumbias*, the rolling, *Nortenas* umpahs, or the croon of a *Ranchera*. And children—laughing, running, screaming, shouting—are all around, with mothers not far behind, calling to them to calm down, mind the cars, and behave.

Jose Casas, who currently plays guitar for I-Attack, a Pilsen-based punk rock band and who grew up not far from here, explains Pilsen bluntly: "26th street and Pilsen—man, you can live your whole life without having to speak a word of English."

When punk broke in the late 1970s, this neighborhood hardly took warning. Folks were too busy readjusting themselves, making ends meet, and trying to get by unnoticed. By the early '80s, there were only a few Southside punk bands—Dead Steelmill and The Kremlins—that, outside their neighborhoods, have long since

been abandoned to the dustbin of history. Otherwise, all the punk bands were on the Northside. But that changed in 1987 when a young Uruguayan organized Pilsen's first punk rock show.

Martin Sorrondeguy had been watching punk bands on Chicago's Northside since the mid-'80s. Sorrondeguy wanted to see a show in his neighborhood, so he did the punk rock thing: he organized one. After convincing Bhopal Stiffs, Ozz Fish Experience, and Generation Waste to play, the Uruguayan native put on a show at Casa Aztlan, a local community center. Over 300 people packed the space, says Sorrondeguy, marking the beginning of the Pilsen and Little Village punk experience.

"There were no bands from the neighborhood," remembers Sorrondeguy, "so I asked bands to come to the neighborhood. It was cool, because people came from everywhere, but there was a lot of Latino kids there."

Even after that show, punks were a rarity in Pilsen and Little Village, Sorrondeguy remembers. He recalls how if he saw someone looking remotely alternative—black and white stockings, boots, or a stickered lunch pail—he'd run down the street to introduce himself.

"Back in the day, there were 10, 15 punks from Pilsen/Little Village," says Benny Hernandez, who works eight to four as a project manager for a small construction firm. "Now, there's a bunch of them—you know, there's these Mexican emo punks, ska punks, hardcore punks, and anarcho punks. Ten years ago, that wasn't the case."

More than 10 years since the Casa Aztlan show, Pilsen and Little Village are now in the middle of a punk renaissance. And Hernandez is nearly at the center of it.

Host of *Radio Desorden*, a weekly bilingual punk and hardcore show broadcasting out of the non-commercial community station Radio Arte, 90.5 FM, Hernandez's hour and a half broadcast is the only stable, regular space for Pilsen and Little Village punks. At the moment, there are almost a dozen punk rock bands based in Pilsen and Little Village; they're a small, tight knit group of folks propelled by the inspiration of those around them, who have found refuge in the same sound and philosophy. But for all the punk rock bands in the area, there is no regular, legitimate spot to play. On the Northside of Chicago, there are a plethora of bars and clubs willing to make money off punks. But in Pilsen and Little Village,

"There are really very few people who are saying anything about what's going on in Pilsen and Little Village. There were no musicians really talking about what was happening in these neighborhoods."



basements, attics, community spaces, and abandoned buildings make up the punk rock venues in the area and the burn out rate for each spot tends to be about three months. Either cops break up the party or neighbors and residents tire of the noise.

"Having the Swayzee is probably the most stable DIY space we've had in a while," says Chris Cabay, who currently plays guitar in No Slogan. But as this issue went to press, Fire Marshals indefinitely suspended any show or group activity in the building. According to Cabay, Chicago's lack of available venues for punk is historic. "Chicago's [always] been about never having stable places to play."

On top of having no legitimate spaces to play, few of these bands have the finances to afford a recording session, which is a cause of concern to *Radio Desorden* host Hernandez.

"I totally, totally, see a parallel to what we're doing right now to the whole late '70s, early '80s Southern California scene," he says. "We have just as much to say, just as much talent, but I fear it's not going to get recorded because of a lack of money."

So out of his own pocket, Hernandez, as well as a few others, is trying to prevent the contemporary Pilsen and Little Village punk rock scene from going unrecorded. In September, the husky 28-year-old Mexican-American helped put out a 7" of original music from Non Fiction Noise. And for the last year, Hernandez has been struggling to release a compilation comprised of half a dozen Pilsen and Little Village punk rock bands—a group collectively known as "southkore." The scene is still relatively intimate, says Hernandez, and as such, neighborhoods and its residents are still uneasy with the mohawks and abrasive music.

"The majority of Mexican immigrants in this city are from small towns and are devout Catholics," explains Hernandez, whose parents migrated from Michoacan, Mexico. "They look at punks or goth kids as demonic. It's funny. A fucking *cholo* can be hanging out in the church with all these tattoos and a teardrop, but that's become a norm. But a kid walks in with spiky hair and it's 'oh, you're a freak.' People are still scared of that in the neighborhood. People are still very scared of punk rock. They think the music is too aggressive, they think it's too fucking loud, they think it's too fucking weird."

Jose Casas agrees with Hernandez, remembering his family's reaction in the late '80s to his playing guitar in a punk band and going to shows.

"Oh man, my parents thought I was crazy. They thought I was

a drug addict, gang banger, Satanist, homosexual," laughs Casas.

In hindsight though, the 30-year-old guitarist says he understands his parents' concern.

"My dad—I can see it from his eyes—he had a hard life. He's still living a hard life. He didn't come all the way from Mexico, being dirt poor, to barely become working class, for me to just squander it all and walk around looking like a peon or a peasant," he says. Casas's father was a *bracero* who came to Chicago in 1952 to work in a factory. "That's something he tried to raise himself up out of, so for him, it was kind of a slap in the face to have his youngest son walking around and saying, 'screw the world'—the world he was trying to be a part of and raise us in."

In 1987, Casas began playing guitar in the Little Village-based thrash band Fuck the Bureaucracy, or FTB. Not long after FTB began playing, Casas met Sorrondeguy. They discussed forming a band that could play benefits for the causes they were involved in. So Sorrondeguy began rehearsing with Fuck the Bureaucracy and Los Crudos was born.

Los Crudos was an unapologetically confrontational group that, unlike FTB, sung in Spanish—a first for the community. The music was loud, abrasive, and aggressive and the lyrics were just as strategic and searing. The final verse of the group's manifesto—"Crudo Soy"—spoke directly to the community of Pilsen like no one had ever done before:

"Triste soy por todo la gente/que la verguenza de ser Latino/Enjado estoy con la juventud/que mata ha nuestros hermanos/Frustrado me siento/que los padres que no enseñan la lengua nuestra/que crían a sus hijos con verguenza de ser latinos/y se creen tan americanos" ("I'm sad because of all the people/who are embarrassed of being Latino/I am angry with the youth that murder our own brothers/I am frustrated with the parents who don't teach our language/Who are ashamed to be latino/they think they are so American!")

The group's catharsis was pretty simple, explains Sorrondeguy: "There are really very few people who are saying anything about what's going on in Pilsen and Little Village. There were no musicians really talking about what was happening in these neighborhoods."

The band never steered away from confrontation within and without their community. As the only Spanish-speaking hardcore band in Chicago, much less Pilsen and Little Village, Los Crudos

were initially treated as a token or a novelty. But they deflected those sentiments through songs like "Hardcoregoismo" (Hard Core Egotism) an indictment of myopic North American punks. They wrote about *pochismo*, immigration, discrimination, neighborhood violence, and other personal experiences. "That's Right, We're That 'Spic Band,'"—the only Los Crudos song recorded in English—was written in response to a remark from a Chicago audience member who once sighed aloud "Oh, it's that spic band."

The first Los Crudos show was in 1991, in a basement off 18th Street in Pilsen. They played wherever they could—community art spaces like Casa Aztlán and Calles y Sueños, church basements, and homes. Within a year, the band embarked on their first tour of the United States. After two more tours of the country, the band did their first tour of Mexico in 1994. All the while, Los Crudos did it all themselves. They hand-screened all their t-shirts and hand-printed all the artwork for the records they released on Sorrondeguy's own record label, Lengua Armada. They booked their own shows and drove themselves from city to city. There was no middle man, no company—nothing but three Mexican-Americans and one Uruguayan doing all the work.

When Los Crudos left for Mexico, a new band, Youth Against Fascism, had begun to play in Pilsen and Little Village. Within a few months, another band, Leyes Criminales made its debut as well. By 1994, these three bands made up the first wave—and only wave for nearly four years—of Pilsen and Little Village punk.

Los Crudos called it quits in October of 1998 after five tours of the United States, two tours of Mexico, a Canadian tour, two weeks in Japan, three months in Europe, and four countries in South America in 1997. Their last show, like their first, was a benefit, this time for Taller Mestizarte, a local art collective.

By late 1998, Pilsen's second punk rock wave had finally gained momentum. The first second wave band, Sin Orden, a group of baby-faced teenagers, began playing alongside Youth Against Fascism and Tras De Nada (formerly Leyes Criminales).

Other teenagers and 20-somethings followed Sin Orden's lead. Soon, Los Jodidos, Non Fiction Noise, and Eske were formed. Eventually Sin Orden disbanded, as one member left the neighborhood for school in the suburbs, but the remaining members went on to form Reaccion and Los Pistoleros.

By 2002, No Slogan—Benny Hernandez's band—Cuatro, I-Attack and Pekadores (featuring former members of Youth Against), rounded out the rest of the Pilsen second wave. What was once a scene defined by three bands now consists of nearly a dozen groups—all playing the same spaces and often sharing the same equipment—working hard to support and promote each other.

The notion of a thriving Latino punk scene in Pilsen and Little Village might defy the image of the Latino community, but Chris Cabay, who is half Mexican, says the Pilsen/Little Village punk scene shouldn't surprise anyone.

"This area has always been more community-oriented," says

Cabay. "It's not necessarily about the style. It's about community and supporting your friends—this idea that people are doing something important. It seems like it's more genuine. There's the bonds of friendship and people identify politically with things, you know, rather than 'Hey, it sounds good, it's something to do for a while.' It seems like there's a deeper interaction."

For Gomez and bandmate Carlos Ruiz, who both play in Reaccion, punk rock used to look like a space for angry white boys. In some sense, it still is. In April 2002, Ruiz went on tour with Vitamin X, a Dutch hardcore band. When the tour hit the East Coast, he found himself at odds with the lack of diversity at the shows.

"A lot of the shows were basically all white guys. I didn't relate to many of the bands that played. I was just out of place," remembers Ruiz. "There would be one person of color and, of course, I would talk to them."

But in Pilsen, they've carved a niche for themselves, outside of neighborhood norms and inspired others.

"Punk before, to me, was a very white, male-dominated space, and I didn't see myself there," says Megan Wells, a band mate of Ruiz and Gomez. "I didn't see myself participating in that punk, but I do see myself participating in a culture where the underrepresented are allowed to get angry and allowed to have microphones—literally—in their hands and say what they want to say."

Anton Zaleski, who runs the small Northside label Underestimated Records, believes the current crop of punk bands in Pilsen and Little Village is the best he has ever seen.

"I just think that the bands are writing better songs and they're probably delving a little deeper into the roots of where they're coming from," says Zaleski, who pays his bills running an independent printing press. "A lot of people think, Hispanic hardcore, Latino hardcore, they think Crudos and that's it—like that's the only band there is. Historically, that's not true."

Despite being an enclave of Latino punks, other issues persist among the Pilsen/Little Village scene as well. Women are still vastly underrepresented at the shows and behind-the-scenes involvement. There are the usual ideological differences between bands, evident by the failed attempt to create a collective that aimed at supplying and sharing equipment, a button maker, and money to press records.

But from the outsiders perspective, the punk boom in a community that has fought to keep its native culture and customs alive—despite the threat of gentrification—still seems perplexing. Why? To Martin Sorrondeguy, who now lives in Santa Ana, California, the answer is simply *why not*.

"I think it had to happen because there were kids who were starving for it," he says. "Kids were like, what's the alternative here? Do we follow the pattern that's been laid out of kids just getting into gang banging or do we start, do we go somewhere else. It was needed. There had to be other voices." ©

"I think it had to happen because there were kids who were starving for it," he says. "Kids were like, what's the alternative here? Do we follow the pattern that's been laid out of kids just getting into gang banging or do we start, do we go somewhere else. It was needed. There had to be other voices."



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THE WAR AT HOME

MONTREAL'S NON-STATUS ALGERIANS FIGHT TO STAY IN CANADA FOLLOWING A NEW 'TOUGH ON TERROR' LAW THAT COULD SEND THEM BACK TO THEIR CONFLICT-RAVAGED HOMELAND.

BY EMMANUEL MADAN ILLUSTRATION BY BRIAN WOOD

There are 200,000 illegal migrants living in Canada right now," says Mohamed Cherfi. "These are people without security, without access to medical care or day care, their children often can't go to school. We have a responsibility to keep fighting for these people, to break the fear and the isolation and help them in their fight for dignity."

Cherfi knows something about fighting for dignity—and survival: he's been battling the Canadian government over the plight of "non-status" Algerian immigrants like himself for almost two years. For Cherfi, one of the central organizers of Montreal-based Action Committee for Non-Status Algerians, the battle is rife with danger—the possibility of his own deportation, along with hundreds of his countrymen, is very real—but it is worth the risk.

"The pain, the fear, even the legal battle, all that is temporary. When all that is done, what remains is for history . . . It gives us a strength which is inspiring. It breaks the myth that as legally vulnerable people we can't resist, we can't stand up for our rights, we have to passively accept our lot: No! We can take action, have taken action, and must continue to take action."


In April 2002, Canadian Immigration Minister Denis Coderre lifted a five-year ban on deportations to Algeria. The ban, begun in 1997 as a result of the civil war there, had meant that

Algerian nationals who had applied for but not obtained refugee status in Canada were nevertheless permitted to remain in the country temporarily. This partial protection came to an end with Coderre's announcement, which he justified by saying that the political situation in Algeria had improved and the civil war was over. Paradoxically, another branch of Coderre's own government was still strongly advising Canadian citizens against traveling to Algeria, citing security and humanitarian risks.

Cherfi sees right through this hypocrisy. "Algeria is Canada's biggest trading partner in the Africa/Middle East region, representing some one billion dollars in commerce every year," he says. "The lifting of the moratorium was a goodwill gesture on Canada's part to normalize political relations with Algeria and create a favorable climate to increase the volume of trade between the two countries." He says it's no coincidence that Coderre's announcement came within 24 hours of a state visit by Canadian Prime Minister Jean Chrétien to Algiers.

The lifting of the ban also corresponded with Canada's continued tightening of laws regarding immigrants and refugees of various nationalities in order to "do its part" in the "war on terror." But in Montreal, just as in other cities across North America, refugees and immigrants have come together to initiate ambitious





campaigns against national security immigration policies that prey on defenseless individuals. For many immigrants affected by the new law, it's a harsh reminder that a "free country" can feel a lot like the homeland they fled.


"In some ways it's worse here than at home," says Cherfi. "At home the dictatorship and the violence are brutal, but they're clearly illegal. Here there's a whole institutionalization of dictatorship; a whole legalistic apparatus which serves to legitimize the trampling of rights. They trample your rights, but they take care to do it in ways which are justifiable by the letter of the law. They quote this and that article of law, national security this and anti-terrorism that."

Algerians have fled their homeland since the outbreak of violence there in 1991 for different reasons: some religious, some political, some personal. Several people I spoke to had members of their families tortured or killed. Others repeatedly received death threats. The nature of the political situation in Algeria is such that even if you attempted to stay neutral in the conflict between the military regime, the religious-led opposition, and the various paramilitaries, you inevitably were seen as aligned with one of these groups and therefore the enemy of another. This led to a situation of generalized, random violence in which everyone was at risk.

The Canadian government's refugee determination system, however, doesn't accept generalized risk in its criteria; in order to be deemed a refugee, you must prove there is a specific threat against you personally due to your religious beliefs, political affiliation, or particular vulnerability to violence from a specific person or group. As a result, many Algerian refugee claims were rejected over the years of the moratorium. By the time deportations were reinstated in April 2002, the number of "non-status" Algerians living in Canada had grown to over a thousand, mostly concentrated in the Montreal area.

Although the non-status Algerian community in Canada represents a wide range of the disparate political persuasions found in their home country, following the repeal of the deportation ban, much of the community was able to put aside their many differences and work together in the Action Committee for Non-status Algerians. Getting there wasn't easy though—the wounds of the unrest they had escaped were still new.

"I was skeptical at first," recalls Ahmed Hussein [name changed by request]. "In the early days, a friend literally dragged me out to the meetings. I went but I didn't see much hope of changing our situation. My feeling was, 'This isn't even our coun-



try, right? We don't make the rules here, so how can we change anything?' What eventually led me to change my view was the commitment and the confidence of a few people within the community—people who were in the minority at first because the majority was still very skeptical, myself included. But we started organizing things, organizing big marches and demonstrations, and gradually our attitude changed."

From June to October, 2002, the Action Committee worked relentlessly to raise awareness of their situation among the general Canadian population, speaking at schools and universities, making links with unions and human rights groups, and organizing large-scale demonstrations, town hall meetings, and press conferences.

One of the more successful actions the group undertook was a surprise visit paid by 25 Algerian women and children to Immigration Minister Coderre's constituency office in the suburbs of Montréal. They refused to leave until their concerns had been addressed by an official: by the time all the women present had recounted their stories, two of Coderre's employees were in tears.

One of the women present that day was due to be deported on October 20, 2002, along with her husband. She was told her two-year-old son, who was born in Canada, would be allowed to stay because he had Canadian citizenship. On the deportation date, she and her husband decided not to comply with the deportation order and didn't show up at the airport, choosing instead to take sanctuary in a church in Montreal's Little Burgundy neighborhood.

Thanks in large part to actions like this, a partial victory was achieved on October 30, 2002, when Minister Coderre bowed to pressure and offered a new procedure through which some of the non-status Algerians might re-apply for residence. But Coderre's backtracking was not a general amnesty for the whole non-status Algerian community—in order to qualify, non-status Algerians had to meet five criteria, pay an exorbitant processing fee, pass an interview with the provincial immigration department, and submit to a final screening by federal authorities for health and national security considerations. (As this issue went to press, over a hundred of the original thousand people are still completely excluded from this special procedure.) From the beginning, the Action Committee had demanded an unconditional amnesty, and since this wasn't what Coderre was offering, they resolved to keep fighting.

Demonstrations and occupations continued all through the winter following the revised ruling and with spring—the anniversary of the lifting of the moratorium—approaching, it became clear to the Committee that Coderre was pointedly ignoring their continued demands. They began to search for new strategies.



ALTHOUGH THE NON-STATUS ALGERIAN COMMUNITY IN CANADA REPRESENT A WIDE RANGE OF THE DISPARATE POLITICAL PERSUASIONS FOUND IN THEIR HOME COUNTRY, FOLLOWING THE REPEAL OF THE DEPORTATION BAN, MUCH OF THE COMMUNITY WAS ABLE TO PUT ASIDE THEIR MANY DIFFERENCES AND WORK TOGETHER IN THE ACTION COMMITTEE FOR NON-STATUS ALGERIANS. GETTING THERE WASN'T EASY THOUGH—THE WOUNDS OF THE UNREST THEY HAD ESCAPED WERE STILL NEW.

"The idea of the May 29 [2003] visit to the Minister's head offices in Ottawa, was to bring attention to the cases of those people who were excluded from the special procedure," recounts Fawzi Malik, whose own case is excluded from the procedure because he was living in the wrong province at the time of its announcement. "We wanted to highlight the fact that after repeated attempts we couldn't get any answer on the issue of the excluded people from the immigration officials here in Montréal. So we decided to go and see the Minister himself, in person."

When a group of Action Committee members and supporters set out on May 29, they expected a repeat of the silence and inaction they'd been receiving from the government in recent months. What happened instead was much worse.

"Honestly, although we hoped to make it past security, we didn't really expect we would," remembers Cherfi. "So it was to our surprise that we found ourselves—10 of us from the Committee with two supporters—in the waiting room of the Minister's office."

What followed was an impromptu occupation of the Immigration Minister's office which lasted approximately 10 hours.

"We just waited and said we wanted to speak to the Minister about a very urgent matter," remembers Mohamed. "The security guards seemed powerless to do anything, I mean after all we were just sitting and waiting in the waiting room. They did allude to the possibility of meeting the Minister at one point, though that never materialized."

"There was a feeling of optimism while we were in that room," Mohamed continues, "a bit like back in October [2002] when the family took sanctuary in the church in Little Burgundy. We really felt like anything was possible. I remember saying that if we just stayed there and waited we'd get not only our residence papers but even our Canadian passports!"

"As it turns out," adds Mohamed, "I think we were blinded by that optimism, by the excitement of being in there, and so we didn't see the danger that was stalking us."

That danger materialized at around 10:30 pm with a massive takedown by a 40-person SWAT team. Some of the Committee members and supporters who were present described the experience as surreal, almost like watching TV.

"It's obvious the police reaction was completely disproportionate: it was like swatting a fly with heavy artillery," recalls Ahmed Hussein. "We were not there to disturb the peace in any way, we were exercising our democratic rights in a completely peaceful way. The only thing unusual about what we did is that we

didn't have an appointment—that was the only thing irregular about our actions that day."

For Andrea Schmidt, a Committee supporter who was arrested that day, the over-response to the Committee's small, peaceful group was humorous—for a moment. "To be honest, my initial reaction was to laugh," she remembers. "That was before they started tasing and beating people." Schmidt says that for several minutes all she could hear was the sound of repeated taser shocks and people crying out in pain.

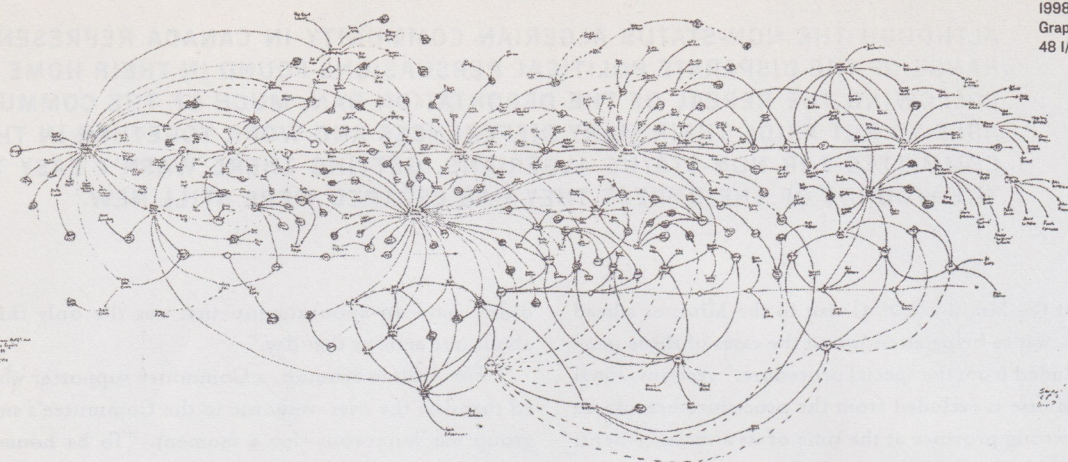
"You know, coming from Algeria we're familiar with a very brutal police repression system," says Mohamed. "People have grown up all their lives with fear of police, of soldiers, of the secret police. And what I saw after May 29 was that people really lost what confidence they had in the Canadian police and security apparatus. Those instincts come back—those instincts that we had in Algeria, where the police can arrest you, brutalize you, and you have absolutely no recourse. But the real fear is not of the police violence, it's of how this can complicate our immigration cases."

That point was driven home for Fawzi Malik when, "after we were arrested, they made us wait for more than half an hour in elevators. There were three police officers in the same elevator with me. I tried to speak to one of them, tried to tell him my story, to explain to him why we had come to the Minister's office and what was at stake for us, you know? And I remember he just said, 'Don't worry Fawzi, you're going to be deported anyway.' To me that's really indicative of what many people in positions of power think about refugees. They don't think in terms of rights. You do these appeals, you go through all the procedures and regulations that they set up, but that appeal is going to be denied, because at the end of the day it's not real, it's just processing that's going to end up with the same outcome."

But for Malik and others in the Action Committee for Non-Status Algerians, a criminal charge is not going to stop continued political action. "We have to keep fighting. We have no choice," he says. "We're going to keep fighting for these rights, either until we get them or until we're deported. It's like that cop said, we're going to be deported anyway, so as long as we have nothing to lose, we may as well expose the real nature of the immigration system, which is based on exploitation, on racism, and injustice." ©

Emmanuel Madan is a Montréal-based musician, journalist and activist who has worked as a member of the Montréal group No One Is Illegal.

"Chicago Outfit and Satellite
Regimes, c.1931-83"
1998
Graphite on paper
48 1/8 x 96 5/8 inches



By Nick Stillman

All images courtesy of Pierogi

MAPQUEST

If I could, I would ask Mark Lombardi a lot of questions. Questions like, "To what extent did you realize Osama bin Laden posed a significant threat to America?" or, "Does it scare you that an FBI agent requested to see one of your drawings just after September 11?" And especially, "Who are the real 'evil ones' the American public should be concerned about?" Unfortunately, I'll never ask him these questions—Lombardi committed suicide in his Brooklyn studio in 2000. He was 48 years old.

The crowd today at New York City's Drawing Center is nothing like the typical Saturday afternoon gallery-hopping throng. There are somber old people, shaking their heads. There are bright-eyed, disbelieving young people, obviously inspired by Lombardi's drawings. And, most incongruously, there are middle-aged Wall Street types in suits, soberly staring down the pieces with blank, sad eyes. They're here to see *Narrative Structures*, a posthumous retrospective of Lombardi's huge, impossibly detailed diagrammatic drawings of high-profile financial and political scandals involving governmental and corporate personnel from all over the world.

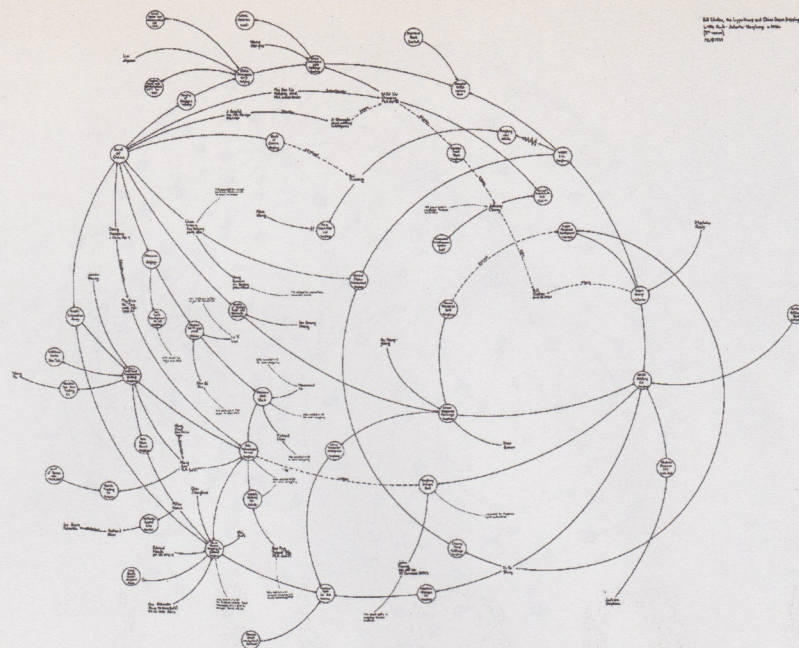
From far away, Lombardi's drawings look like tightly-composed scientific or business diagrams. Swooping arrows conjoin dozens of nodes, mapping the dizzying interconnectedness of politics to corporations, of corporations to natural resources, and of course, of natural resources to politics. Move in closer and it becomes clear that the drawings' form is a convenient method of exposing their damning content.

"It's an electrifying moment," says Frances Richard, who teaches at Barnard and wrote one of the two catalogue essays for

Narrative Structures. "You've just enjoyed your visual cake, airy and fragile and decoratively luscious, and then you're forced to eat it, to digest this heavy dose of economic, political, caustic, and complicated reference."

Lombardi began making his diagram-drawings in 1994, in the midst of the roaring '90s and well before Osama bin Laden had supplanted Saddam Hussein as America's favorite Arab villain. The drawings coolly show the recurrent corruption and disturbing greed of advanced capitalism at work, usually centering on banking and investment scandals that are normally cursorily skimmed in newspaper business sections. Taken as a group, *Narrative Structures* represents a powerful critique of the dysfunctions of the global economy and economic laissez-faire of the Reagan, George HW Bush, Clinton, and George W Bush regimes. As the capital piled up and the '90s boomed all around him, Lombardi refused to let white-collar criminals off the hook.

Lombardi based his information-overloaded drawings on meticulous research he conducted using mostly public records available at local libraries. He discovered his talent for research when he was just a college undergraduate. While studying at the University of Syracuse, Lombardi worked as chief researcher for the Everson Museum at Syracuse's 1973 "Teapot Dome to Watergate" show. He later moved to Houston, a location that would further influence the direction his art would later take. Living in the heart of oil country and the epicenter for the savings and loan (S&L) scandals exposed in the late 1980s by Houston journalist Pete Brewton informed the artwork that Lombardi would later produce.



"Bill Clinton, the Lippo Group, and China Ocean Shipping Co. a.k.a. COSCO, Little Rock-Jakarta-Hong Kong, c.1990s (5th Version)"
1999
Graphite and colored pencil on paper
60 5/8 x 75 inches

ARTIST MARK LOMBARDI'S INTRICATE, DIAGRAMMATIC MAPS OF THE FLOW MONEY BEHIND WORLD POWERS BROUGHT HIM NOTORIETY IN THE NEW YORK ART WORLD. DID THEY ALSO DRIVE HIM TO COMMIT SUICIDE?

Legend has it that Lombardi happened upon the format for his complex drawings while talking on the phone to a lawyer-friend who was explaining a complicated network of political and corporate relationships. While his friend talked, Lombardi jotted webs to arrange the information in a visually legible manner. Something clicked.

Lombardi began working on the drawings that would make up the *Narrative Structures* exhibit in 1994. While the form changed and evolved between 1994 and 2000, the content remained remarkably focused on money transfer among the global power elite: the axis of greed, if you will.

"Mark was making available a scheme for looking at what is mostly hidden, counteracting the aura of infotainment chaos with the presentation of causality," Richard says.

Without a doubt, the most chilling Lombardi drawing on display at the Drawing Center is "George W. Bush, Harken Energy and Jackson Stephens, c.1979-1990 (5th version)," completed in 1999. Lombardi clearly shows money flowing from Republican backers through the Republican National Committee to George HW Bush, to George W Bush's Texas-based company Harken Energy, to the mysterious James R. Bath, to Sheik Salim bin Laden—brother of Osama. James R. Bath was a Houston businessman who was hired in the late '70s by wealthy Saudis to invest in American corporations with their money. In 1979, Bath invested in W's Arbusto Energy, which eventually merged with Spectrum 7 Energy Corporation, retaining W as its head and later merging into Harken Energy.

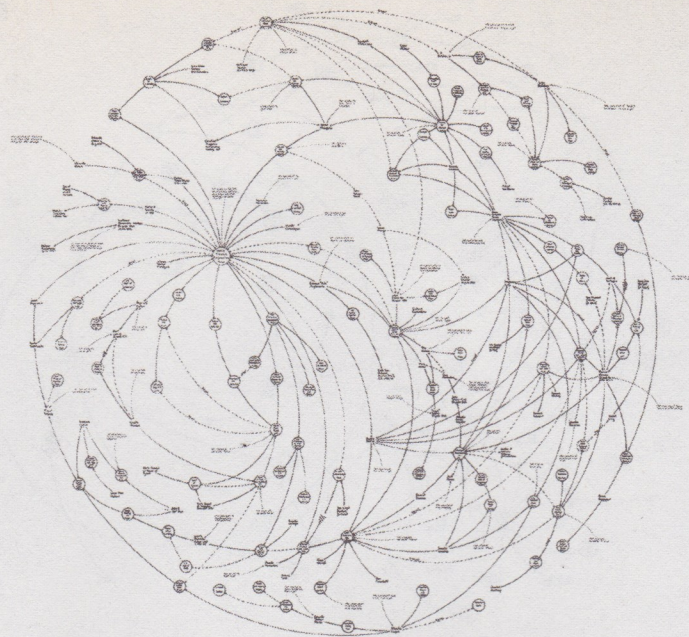
In her article "Obsessive—Generous," published at wburg.com

(and excerpted for the *Narrative Structures* catalogue), Richard explains, "In 1990 [Harken Energy] embarked upon a sweetheart deal to drill oil wells in Bahrain . . . Oil industry cognoscenti again assume that the Bahrain contract was orchestrated as a favor from the Saudis to the American chief executive and his family." W made out like a bandit when, in 1990, he sold the majority of his Harken Energy stock, and watched as the stock lost 75 percent of its value as his father became involved in the Gulf War.

As if W's chilling involvement in the bin Ladens' wealth accumulation wasn't bad enough, "Banca Nazionale del Lavarò, Reagan, Bush, and Thatcher and the Arming of Iraq, ca.1983-1991," a 1995 drawing, details the involvement of two American presidents in the well-known funding of Saddam Hussein to combat a feared enemy of Reagan and HW Bush: Iran. This drawing plainly shows enormous sums of money (between \$800 and \$950 million) flowing from the US Department of Agriculture under Secretary John Block to the Commodity Credit Corporation, to several other corporations, then to Iraq for the purpose of arms purchases.

While the rest of the art world was consumed with identity politics and free-for-all "pluralism," Lombardi's work was an austere and solitary island. In part because of the obvious disparity between his complex mapping of politics and economics and the typical work of the rest of the New York art world, Lombardi seemed to be on the cusp of real art world stardom.

"I think he was due for a significant step into fame," Richard says. "And I also think that success would have created an interesting context for change in the work. It would have been fascinating



"World Finance Corporation and Associates, c.1970-84: Miami, Ajman, and Bogota-Caracas (Brigada 2506: Cuban Anti-Castro Bay of Pigs Veteran) (7th Version)" 1999
Graphite and colored pencil on paper
69 1/8 x 84 inches

LOMBARDI'S WORK IS A TOTAL DEBUNKING OF THE NAÏVE IDEA THAT GOVERNMENTS AND CORPORATIONS ARE LOOKING OUT FOR YOUR BEST INTEREST, A COLD DENIAL THAT THE PR MACHINES THESE INSTITUTIONS EMPLOY GIVE THE PUBLIC ANY SEMBLANCE OF WHAT HAPPENS BEHIND THE SCENES, ANY SEMBLANCE OF *THE TRUTH*.

to see him extend the use of 'corporate vernacular,' as he called it, to tackle things like 9/11 or Enron, or even to grapple with the change in his own finances."

Lombardi's big break seemed to come when he was invited to show "BCCI-ICIC-FAB, c.1972-1991 (4th version)," a drawing narrating the collapse of the monumentally corrupt Bank of Credit and Commerce, International at the Museum of Modern Art's PSI Gallery's "Greater New York" group show in February of 2000. While it was a huge step forward in his art career, everything wasn't necessarily perfect for Lombardi. He battled depression—which friends speculate was at least partly influenced by the truths he learned about in his work—and he drank excessively. He also experienced a crushing string of bad luck in the spring of 2000 culminating in the sprinkler system in his studio malfunctioning a mere 10 days before the "Greater New York" opening, destroying several drawings, including the one scheduled to show at PSI. Although he remade the piece in time for the show, the strain of doing so in a short amount of time may have put him over the edge.

He was found hanged from his ceiling less than a month after the opening of "Greater New York."

There's a temptation to construct elaborate theories that Lombardi was killed by the same shadowy—and not-so-shadowy—figures his artwork revealed, but no one gives speculation like that much currency. According to friends and acquaintances, Lombardi was unhappy, maybe a little manic-depressive, and definitely a lot obsessive. And he's seriously missed by the close-knit

community of artists and art professionals in the Williamsburg neighborhood of Brooklyn.

"People missed him not only as a friend, a member of the community, and an exciting artist," Richard says, "but as what you might call a public intellectual, a watch-dog, a commentator, and an explainer."

The difference between Lombardi and most other people is that most other people let things go. They shake their heads after reading the business section and move on. Lombardi clearly couldn't, and it might have driven him crazy. *Narrative Structures* lucidly documents the painful fallibility of late capitalism's banking and governmental structures and the international instability they caused—ultimately leading to catastrophic events like September 11. Lombardi's work is a total debunking of the naïve idea that governments and corporations are looking out for your best interest, a cold denial that the PR machines these institutions employ give the public any semblance of what happens behind the scenes, any semblance of *the truth*.

Lombardi's drawings are also impossibly delicate and gorgeously ethereal. Back away from a drawing too far and the crushing information disappears, dissolving into a fragile abstraction. As Richard says, "Standing before those drawings allows political thought to touch aesthetic thought, civilian-citizen thought to mingle with aesthetic-conceptual thought, organically, as they do in real life." ©



NEXT ISSUE, PUNK PLANET CELEBRATES 10 YEARS OF REPORTING INDEPENDENT VOICES. THANK YOU FOR MAKING IT POSSIBLE.



A DOGGED INVESTIGATION INTO TWO MEN'S WRONGFUL CONVICTION

"It just gets harder and harder every day."

I often think of something I heard John J. Tennison say on a scorching day in mid-2000. Sitting in a tiny room at Mule Creek State Prison, the following words spilled quietly from the solemn, dignified man: "It just gets harder and harder every day."

At that point, Tennison had spent a decade caged for a murder he claimed he didn't commit.

Living in a six-by-eight-foot cell in a maximum security lock-up, surrounded by a sea of lifers, Tennison kept his head down, trying to keep from being shanked, beaten, or raped. During the day he worked an 18¢-an-hour job in the prison print shop. At night he called his mom and brother collect, or connected with the outside via FM radio.

Tennison had been banished from the free world for murdering a San Francisco teenager, 17-year-old Roderick "Cooley" Shannon in 1989.

At the time a brutal tit-for-tat gang war was raging between black teens hailing from different hoods. Tennison and his purported accomplice, Antoine "Soda Pop" Goff, were from Hunters Point, a decrepit, über-tough African American district in south-east San Francisco. Shannon lived a few miles away in the infamous Sunnydale housing projects. According to police, Tennison and Goff attacked Shannon and blasted him in the face with a shotgun in the parking lot of a graffiti-ridden corner grocery store near the Sunnydale projects. The cops figured it was revenge for a massacre carried out by Shannon's buddies.

With the help of a skilled private investigator, I revisited the crime—interviewing Tennison and Goff, studying the evidence, poring over the trial transcripts and myriad legal briefs, walking the crime scene, and tracking down witnesses to the slaying.

After my journalistic probe, I felt fairly certain that a terrible injustice had been done: that Tennison and Goff had not killed Shannon, that police and prosecutors had engaged in dubious behavior—and that the real executioner was walking the streets. I

wrote up my findings in an 8,000-word expose for an alternative weekly paper in San Francisco.

In truth, I never really expected the two men to go free. The criminal justice system is stacked against convicts who assert their innocence. Amazingly, in most cases the defendant's "actual innocence"—to use a legal term—isn't even grounds for canceling a guilty verdict. Despite what you've seen on TV, an infinitesimally small number of cons ever have their sentences overturned. And in 2000, legal efforts to spring Tennison had basically shuddered to a standstill. Three state courts and one federal court had rejected his appeals. Goff's bid for freedom faced even more legal roadblocks.

Now, three years later, Tennison and Goff are uncaged.

Tennison is a free man because last summer federal Judge Claudia Wilken issued a 103-page ruling voiding his conviction and ordering prison authorities to release him within 60 days. In her decision, Wilken noted that cops and prosecutors buried a slew of pertinent clues, keeping key evidence—like the fact that a witness had cleared the defendants and blamed another man for the killing—from defense lawyers during the trial.

A few days after the judge's ruling came down, Goff's sentence was reversed as well. The courts have now formally declared both men innocent.

This, I think, is the proper outcome. Tennison and Goff should never have been jailed. The wafer-thin evidence arrayed against them was nothing more than the inconsistent, constantly morphing testimony of two young girls, a pair of admitted car thieves.

Taken as a whole, the evidence suggests that three high-profile San Francisco law enforcers—famed police inspector Napoleon Hendrix; Prentice Earl Sanders, who recently retired as police chief; and longtime assistant district attorney George Butterworth—deliberately framed two men.

"They must've understood what they were doing."

Forty years ago the United States Supreme Court issued a landmark decision in a case called *Brady v. Maryland*. It involved a guy named

UNRAVELED

By A.C. Thompson

LEADS TO FREEDOM—AND PICKING UP THE PIECES OF SHATTERED LIVES.

John Brady, who got popped for shooting somebody during a robbery and was sentenced to death. But he didn't do it—another man pulled the trigger, a fact prosecutors concealed when Brady stood trial.

In the *Brady* decision, the Supremes said, essentially, prosecutors and cops can't hide evidence that exonerates a defendant. Subsequent rulings have refined the concept and solidified *Brady* as a cornerstone of the American criminal justice system.

The *Brady* precedent lay at the heart of Tennison and Goff's habeas corpus appeals.

Public Defender Jeff Adachi, a savvy courtroom pitbull who favors crisp, Mafia-esque suits, represented Tennison at trial back in 1990. He's literally had nightmares about the case ever since—his subconscious plagued with the knowledge that his client was rotting away in a cell.

Adachi is still furious. The cops and prosecutor, he maintains, "deliberately chose" not to turn over crucial clues to the defense. "The only case you can make is that this was an intentional suppression of evidence. It was new evidence, it was fresh in their minds at the time of [the] trial," growls Adachi.

The evidence that still burns in Adachi's conscience included:

- A memo authorizing the cops to draw \$2,500 from a "Secret Witness Fund," apparently to pay one of the witnesses who testified against Tennison and Goff. Giving cash to witnesses raises doubts about their credibility and would've become a major legal issue at trial. The police say they don't know what happened to the money.
- The fact that during a police-administered polygraph test of a star witness, the witness told the polygrapher that she had lied about seeing the murder, and that she'd been pressured into lying by the other key witness. These damning statements were hidden from the defense.
- Paperwork indicating the existence of a woman who exonerated the defendants. This person told the cops Tennison and Goff weren't involved in the murder and fingered a man

named Lovinsky Ricard as the assailant. She met with the police three times and gave them the names of seven people who could verify her story. The defense was never told anything about her.

• Even after Tennison and Goff were found guilty, police and prosecutors continued to sit on evidence. In 1990, about two weeks after the trial concluded, Lovinsky Ricard was picked up on a minor drug beef. While in custody, he spontaneously told police he'd killed Shannon. It took six months for this bombshell to reach the defense lawyers, who by then were appealing the case with a motion for a new trial.

Most of the evidence at issue was pried loose 11 years after the trial by a team of lawyers led by Ethan Balogh and Elliot Peters, who took on Tennison's appeal pro bono in 2001 after reading my story.

Peters and company devoted thousands of hours to the case; had Tennison been paying, the appeal probably would've run him close to \$800,000 in legal fees.

Looking at the overall arc of the case, "you've got to be really angry with the police and assistant district attorney," Peters told me. "They must've understood what they were doing. They had evidence that JJ and Antoine weren't involved. . . . They shored up their chances of a conviction by concealing evidence."

The attorneys hired a private detective to track down one of the prosecution's primary witnesses, who'd been 14 years old at the time of the trial. In what is probably the most damaging fact to emerge from the legal battle, this so-called witness gave a sworn statement saying her courtroom testimony was bunk—and that it had been coerced by the prosecution team.

"I told Inspector Hendrix and Mr. Butterworth that I had not witnessed the killing," she stated, adding they didn't seem "interested in hearing the truth," and she "felt pressured" to lie.

I contacted Sanders, Hendrix, and Butterworth requesting comment for this story. Through a spokesperson, Butterworth declined to go on the record. Neither Hendrix or Sanders agreed



"I USED TO BE REAL SOCIABLE, THE CENTER OF ATTENTION. NOW I GUESS I'VE BEEN GONE SO LONG I DON'T KNOW WHAT TO SAY."

to talk to me. However, when I interviewed Sanders in 2001, he claimed the police probe was conducted in good faith. "At no time in my career," Sanders said adamantly, "did I intentionally or unintentionally influence a witness." But he also admitted to me that he'd interviewed the female witness who'd exonerated Tennison and Goff before trial, and that slip up gave defense lawyers the first fresh lead they'd had in years.

"I've been gone so long."

Today Tennison, a quiet, devoutly religious man, seems a little overwhelmed by life "on the outs."

"Some days I don't want to do nothing but lay in bed. I feel I deserve that right," he says, his voice soft. His life is a small circuit: He goes from his mother's place, to his brother's place, to his grandmother's place. He likes to walk by himself on the beach. Faith and family, Tennison, now 31, says, got him through his ordeal. "God and I became close friends. I prayed and prayed and prayed."

There's bitter irony to his story: When he was locked up, Tennison knew he didn't belong in a concrete tomb with a bunch of killers. Now, though, after 13 years in the gulag, he has difficulty relating to non-convicts.

Goff, a smallish man with a wisp of a goatee, is in a similar situation. He was 21 when he went to the pen, and did much of his time behind bars at Pelican Bay State Prison, a notorious "super-max" facility near the Oregon border known for its Aryan Brothers and maniacal guards. While he was there guards threw a mentally ill inmate into a tub of scalding, 125-degree water. "I was cooking," that prisoner would later tell *60 Minutes*.

The place—deemed to be unconstitutionally cruel by a federal judge—was a fucking horror show; at one point Goff watched a rifle-equipped correctional officer break up a melee on the exercise yard by putting a bullet in the head of an inmate.

"I'm sitting there wondering if I'm going to get out of there alive," he recalls.

Goff hasn't slept much since his release and still rises every morning at 5 a.m. He tried to get a new social security card—the first step to getting a job—and found he couldn't remember the number.

Crowds seem to freak him out a bit. At a barbecue in his honor, as 50 Cent boomed from a stereo and ribs sizzled on the grill, he hovered on the fringes, seeming almost detached from the event, clad in newly purchased Sunday church attire, a Mona Lisa grin on his face.

Looking at the throng gathered to welcome him home, he says to me, "I used to be real sociable, the center of attention. Now I guess I've been gone so long I don't know what to say."

Too many pieces of evidence.

Legal experts will tell you most incidents where police and prosecutors fail to turn over evidence are accidental blunders—a misplaced file here, a mislabeled vial of blood there. Perhaps Sanders, Hendrix, and Butterworth simply bungled the Tennison-Goff case, inadvertently holding onto material they should've given to the defense team.

That, however, seems doubtful.

There are simply too many pieces of evidence that obviously should've made it into the hands of the defense lawyers but didn't. Bear in mind: the rules about disclosing evidence aren't exactly quantum physics—they're simple, and they're known to every rookie cop and first-year law student. And these were not insignificant clues, either: we're talking about a witness who cleared Tennison and Goff, and the confession of a man who claimed to be the killer. Add to that the allegation that Hendrix and Butterworth pressured another witness into giving bogus testimony and you have what looks to be a major-league frame-up.

Why?

The court record indicates Sanders and Hendrix locked onto Tennison within days of the shooting. Both Tennison and Goff were regarded as somewhat rough characters who hung out with a crew of hard-ass young men at a time when the hollow *clack-clack-clack* of gunfire was a constant sound in the city's African American neighborhoods. Both were known to police, and Tennison had been picked up a couple of times for selling weed.

Perhaps the cops thought they had the right guys and just didn't have enough evidence to convince a jury.

Even when the detectives unearthed credible evidence implicating another dude, it seems they couldn't let go of their hunch about Tennison and Goff.

For 13 years John J. Tennison and Antoine Goff lived like ghosts, linked to the outside world only by letters, phone calls, and the rare visit from family members. Those 13 years are gone. No judge's decision is ever going to return that stolen portion of their lives. All that's left now are the scars.

By contrast, the men responsible for this mess have yet to suffer any ill consequences. Today, Butterworth is still a senior deputy D.A. Hendrix is a respected cop. Sanders just retired on a full chief's pension of \$188,718 a year.

One last ugly question still hangs in the air:

Napoleon Hendrix and Prentice Earl Sanders put in more than 30 years at the Hall of Justice. George Butterworth has been there since 1976. The three men have handled hundreds of cases, many of them homicides. What other convictions should I be looking at? ©

Investigative reporter A.C. Thompson lives in San Francisco. A different version of this story originally appeared in the San Francisco Bay Guardian.

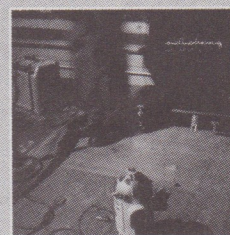




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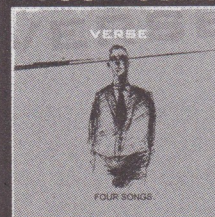
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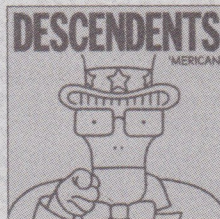
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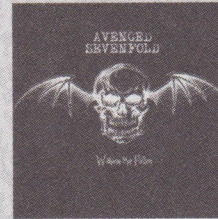
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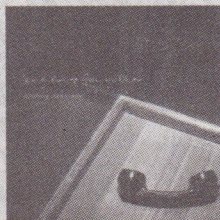
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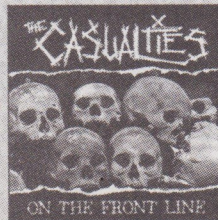
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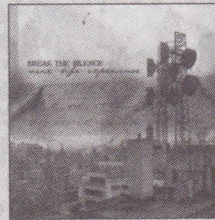
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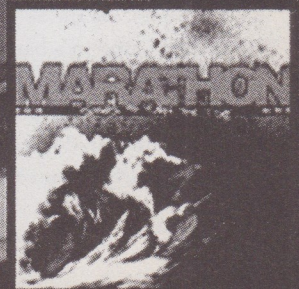
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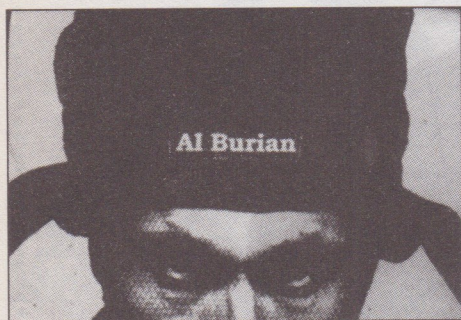


DEBUT 5 SONG E.P.

columns

PP60

al burian
larry livermore
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jessica hopper



If unsolicited publications arriving at your door are any kind of litmus, the arc of my life since moving to the city of Chicago has been a steady descent. The clunk-

ing arrival of the *Chicago Tribune* every morning was a welcome respite from the drudgery and tension of my first apartment, a living situation which seemed totally bottom-of-the-barrel at the time but has now already glazed over into nostalgic remember-when's, into the mythologized good old days. That place was pretty nice, in retrospect, and the price was fair, the location was reasonable, and if nothing else it came with the *Tribune*, courtesy of whatever tenant had moved out before I moved in, probably some lonely person suckered into a subscription by a telemarketer on some desolate winter afternoon.

My new apartment features no phone, and thus no telemarketers, but the guy who I displaced in order to move in left behind, along with a room full of cigarette ash, dirty socks, and empty prescription containers, a subscription to *Alternative Press* magazine, arriving monthly at the house to mock and torment me. I'm not intending to champion the *Chicago Tribune*, or any facet of the US news media, really, but a demotion to AP magazine as my solitary source of information about the outside world is a bitter pill to swallow indeed. Now I have to wait for world events to filter themselves through the consciousness of indie-rock bands and re-express themselves in their art, and this process can take months, even years. For instance, using AP I can be assured of a vague awareness that John F. Kennedy is no longer President of the United States, via the re-united content-free Dead Kennedys, but apparently being in a band called I Am the World Trade Center is still uncontroversial, indicating that I will probably be in my early forties before the political events of my late 20s are excreted back out of the intestinal tract of the culture industry and become part of the popularly accepted landscape.

The current issue of AP contains a full-page spread on a band I briefly shared a practice space with. Said band has recently signed a record contract with major label Dreamworks, and the singer laments: "It really is hard to write songs now... The minute you write something, you start questioning yourself: 'Is this too melodic? Is this too radio-friendly?'"

Poor guy, I think; this is the same mistake punk bands make every time they try to go pro, having the pangs of moral self-consciousness after the fact, deciding to offset discomfort with their own careerism by producing an inaccessible or unmarketable record to prove their "integrity." No one wins in this equation: the punks who object on moral or aesthetic grounds to professional aspirations have already given up on you long ago, and the people left would rather hear radio hits than a weak simulacrum of what being out of control sounds like. Too melodic? Too radio-friendly? I want to shake this guy, yell at him: "Write some god damn radio hits, you idiot! You're on Dreamworks!" To me, it seems like going through law school, passing the bar exams, getting a job at the big firm downtown, and then showing up on your first day wearing a ripped-up Crass T-shirt. Why bother? The only people who are going to respect such a pointless statement are people who value acts of wanton, self-destructive stupidity.

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I caught myself, the other morning, in the act of punching a wall while listening to Black Flag. It occurred to me how essentially unromantic the activity is, really, despite the hype: it's the action of a deranged person, a person who has not learned how to process their emotions correctly. I did this sort of thing at 13, and continue at 31, making the behavior dyslexic on top of everything.

But it works; now it's almost less an outburst and more an exercise, like nihilist yoga. You listen to Black Flag, punch the wall, stamp around, and feel better. Not very sophisticated, but then, punk is all about undirected anger, hysterical episodes. Black Flag lurches through "I've had it:" one minute 20 seconds of pure economy of motion, of great American art. "I am going to explode—I'VE HAD IT!" yells the singer. This song, executed with simian musical prowess but palpable, explosive anger, is an encapsulation of the moment of overload, both

as a recording (the perfection of its imperfection: speakers blown, guitars out of tune, singer bellowing like a rankled wildebeest) and as an encapsulation of that moment in life, the moment when you find yourself picking up a chair and swinging it wildly at friends, relatives, co-workers, anyone in vicinity. It feels good to have a tantrum once in a while, it feels good to explode, but a minute and 20 seconds later it's over and the security guards are removing the furniture shrapnel from your fingers and handcuffing you. These moments may be necessary, but they are regrettable, and certainly nothing to base your life around, nothing to advocate to other people.

"The sound of incompetence became the basis for a genre"—so say the liner notes to the Damned greatest hits album. And that's punk for you, definitionally. When you find yourself having a "punk" moment in your own personal sphere, an ugly moment which is indicative of synaptic misfire and lamentable lack of self-control, it makes you wonder: *How am I going to gloss this one over? How am I going to stand here, now, Ralph Nader-style, and endorse this sub-cultural package?*

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I'm not even going to bother with an explanation of why major labels are bad, as I don't believe anyone has cared about this topic, one way or the other, since 1996 or so. Even ever-reliable *HeartattaCk* magazine refuses to publish people's diatribes about Rage Against the Machine anymore. No one seems concerned, so why should I spend my time harping on it? Live and let live—there are bigger fish out there to fry.

Still, despite lack of coherent arguments, punk retains an element of knee-jerk anti-establishmentarianism, an underdog fetish which produces vehement disdain for those perceived as profiteering off of or "selling out" the culture. Thus, when I recently interviewed fellow *Punk Planet* columnist Jessica Hopper for another friend's fanzine, I was complimented by more than one person for my journalistic integrity, because I had "called her on her shit." "You TOTALLY got her to admit that what she does for a living is WRONG!" went the gleeful gloats. But these people are sloppy readers, gleaning from her words only what they want to hear. What Jessica actually said was that, while publicity (read: professionalisation) may have an adverse effect on punk (or anything else, for that matter), "there is not enough of an

underground that's cohesive, that's separate enough, and unwilling to go over to that side of the fence, to maintain their separateness." My experiences reading AP magazine would tend to confirm this worldview. Is it somehow the publicists' fault that so many people I know appear in glossy photo-shoots, grudgingly glowering into the lens as if this is taking years off their life? Is it the fault of Dreamworks that it is now so hard to write a song?

What bothers me about professionalism is not the political or moral ramification; I am bothered on a purely personal level. Before I was punching walls in the name of punk I was just punching walls; I was a fuck-up, a mutant, a goon, a goof. I never imagined career prospects in it. Punk music was just an affirmation of what was, a recognition that our hearts are filled with darkness and our heads are full of faulty wiring. Listening to it was a way not to feel alone in that. So I worry, when a success story filters out, not so much because I think that the sanctification of a Kurt Cobain represents global capital subsuming a viable revolutionary force, as that I know my own anti-social actions are out of the closet, demystified, quantifiable. And, as always happens when the numbers are crunched, the math is not on my side: I look like a loser, a goon, a goof, yet again. I worry when I see glossy magazines full of predatory white males posturing in edgy wardrobes, looking uncomfortably like the guys I was scared of in high school. I worry because I wonder where the safe space is, these days, for an actually alienated person, a person who makes the age-old mistake of admitting to feelings, asking too many questions, displaying weakness, being different, making others uncomfortable. Punk turns in on itself, tries to sabotage itself, to ruin the hit single before it's even written. Post-punk, kids don't make that mistake: they are over self-destruction, they are actualized and empowered in their alienation, bringing a handgun to school to kill the principal if he gets them down. Maybe punk has lost the capacity to be anything beyond entertainment, diversion, here in the age of the suicide bomber, in the post shock-value age, in a world that exposes us daily to darker areas of the soul than Black Flag ever knew existed.

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Williamsburg, Brooklyn: standing onstage at the North Six

rock club, holding a wad of bloody paper towels to my forehead and surveying the crowd. Now I really do feel stupid. This is bad. The punk rock aesthetic, the sound of incompetence as the basis for a genre, elevated by me to a way of life—*more than music*, as the slogan goes, incompetence can be a mode of existence, can inform your every action and impulse, if you let it. I shake my head and quietly berate myself. *You stupid idiot*, I think, *punching the wall is one thing, a private moment between you and the records, but this is way worse*. What really bothers me, though, is that on some level I am also proud of myself, for the perfectly executed stunt: at the Jade Tree records showcase for CMJ, I stood on stage and dedicated the last song of my band's set to my high school friend Jimmy Fountain. "Jimmy Fountain, who encouraged me to pick up the guitar," I said, and did proceed, during the song, to pick up the guitar, and drop it on my head. Genius!

There was a lot of blood, and people like that, it denotes suffering and therefore musical integrity. Debilitating injury is one of the standards in my canon of musical performative moves, not by design but by a lethal combination of exuberance and clumsiness. But this is what people look for and respond to in punk. Tonight's act of stupidity is processed by the public in the familiar way; light-headed and a little woozy, I lean against a wall to the side of the stage and receive accolades. "Hell yeah!" people say, holding up hands to high-five me. "No, no," I explain. "This isn't cool. This sucks. There is nothing noble about this. I'm just clumsy, and not that bright." The appreciative audience is undaunted, slapping me on the back and smiling. "Krist Novoselic!" someone yells at me, referencing the bass player of Nirvana's similar stunt on an MTV broadcast some years ago. That's depressing; I don't mind being told that I am a bad musician or can't draw, but being called out on your lack of originality really stings. Another kid, wide-eyed, asks me, "What was going through your mind, when you looked down on the ground and saw all the blood everywhere?" I give him the most honest answer I can muster. "I was thinking, 'oh no, not again. Now I probably have to get stitches.'"

Jade Tree CEO Darren Walters pushes through the crowd of well-wishers and presses a \$20 into my hand, insisting that I quit socializing and get into the taxi waiting outside to take me to the emergency room. Jimmy Fountain rides with me. He is more impressed with Darren than with me. "Seems like you're on a good record label," he says. "They paid for your cab and everything."

"Oh, it'll come out of my royalties later," I explain. Good old Jimmy Fountain: he really did start me playing guitar, in a serious way, if the outcome here in my ostensibly adult life may be termed "serious." Jimmy was a punk, when I first met him, not in the way of leather jacket and spiked bracelet, but in the more serious and profound way that I have always known punk to be, the borderline autistic way where you just creep the square people out by your sheer existence. We were friends pretty immediately. Jimmy and I lived together in our teen years, at my grandma's house in Chapel Hill after she passed away. By some logistical error we were unsupervised by adults, and so started a band there, practicing usually between 3 and 5 AM, drunk on the joy of amps turned up all the way in a room I had always

known as quiet and somber. After a month or so of this, the old lady across the street politely asked us to stop. "My husband has been wanting to call the police for weeks," she told us. "But I said, let's not discourage those boys, it sounds like they've really got talent."

The romantic spin on my head injury has faded out by the time we arrive at the emergency room, and the ego-boost of approving looks at the show is more than killed by the woman at the front desk, on the phone with some other romeo as I walk in. "Oh, sure, *now* you call me baby," she snarls into the receiver, "Well, you better... oh, hold on." She puts down the phone, and gives me a cursory once-over. "What happened to you?" she says.

"I hit myself in the head," I say sheepishly.

"With what?" she asks.

"A guitar," I admit.

She gives me a brief, exasperated look, then resumes professionalism. I can only imagine how this looks to her, from the vantage point of her job, the revolving door of injury and accident, unromantic and statistical, some tragic, others just stupid. As she writes down the fake name and bogus social security number I give her, she comments, "Yeah, I saw that on TV once, I think. The old throw the guitar in air but then you don't manage to catch it trick?"

"Yeah, that was pretty much it," I concede.

"It would have been cool if you caught it though, right?" she says.

"Yeah, would have been," I agree.

I wait for them to call the pseudonym I've given, and then follow an orderly to a cot, where I await surgery. In the cot next to mine sits a guy wearing a postal worker's uniform, with a nasty-looking cut on his index finger. He checks out my state of affairs, and asks: "Did you get in a fight? Were you at a bar?"

"I was at a bar," I say. "But it wasn't a fight. I was the entertainment."

"I don't go to bars anymore," he tells me. "Too violent. I've seen too many bar brawls. When I want to drink, I stay home and drink alone." I don't ask him how he got his cut. Postal carrier, that was always my back-up dream job if punk rocker didn't pan out. It has all the same elements that attracted me to punk: bags of mail, long walks around the neighborhood, the occasional violent tantrum and a trip to the ER to get stitches.



A Pop-Up Book About Me

I've been writing a book. It's a very interesting book, at least to me. I don't know

if it will be to anyone else. I'm not sure anyone else will even read it. I may just throw it away when it's done.

Actually, the writing is pretty much done, and I've been rewriting and polishing it for a couple months now. Sometimes it's completely fascinating, and other times I can't help asking why anybody would waste their time writing this stuff, let alone reading it.

The book, you see, is about me (hence the Judy and the Loadies reference that the more musically astute among you will have recognized). And I don't know how interesting I am. When I was younger I used to spend hours, days, weeks even, thinking about myself and trying to decide if I was intelligent or stupid, staring at myself in the mirror and trying to decide if I was good-looking or ugly. But eventually that sort of self-examination gets old. Or so I thought.

This book looks at nearly 50 years of my life, and it's not a pretty picture. Still, there's something compelling about it, like watching a train wreck in slow motion. You know it's going to end in disaster, you even know exactly what kind of disaster, you know there's nothing you can do to prevent it, and yet you're willing to see it happen again and again.

That's not a very self-affirming image, is it, comparing my life to a train wreck? I've wondered if I'm being too hard on myself, but all I tried to do was recite the plain facts of what happened, and as it happened, most of them turned out to be bad.

It's not that I had such a hard time of it. I was born into a working class, moderately dysfunctional family where money was in short supply and religious repression plentiful, but compared with about 90 percent of the world's population, I had it pretty good. I never went without food or shelter except for a few brief periods when I was penniless and homeless through, it has to be admitted, my own choice and/or fault.

I haven't had to work too hard, at least not compared with most of the people in the factories where I started out, and most of the time I've been paid a lot better for it. I've seen 47 states, five provinces, and 19 countries, far more of the world than I ever dreamed possible as a kid in Detroit, when I never made it as far west as Chicago or as far east as Cleveland.

So, a colorful, exciting, and relatively easy life: why does it make me think of a train wreck? Well, there seems to be recurring themes of being on the wrong track, going off the rails, being unable to stop, coming to a great, thudding crash, and looking around to see everything I thought mattered reduced to a pile of smoldering rubble. If that's not putting too fine a point on it.

Am I being over-dramatic? Yes, of course: it's one of my most characteristic, if least endearing, faults. But even looking on the bright side of things... well, that's not easy to do, because looking on the dark side of things is an even more characteristic and even less endearing fault of mine. The one thing that becomes painfully obvious from looking at my life in 300 pages of small print is that through most of it I haven't been a very nice person, not to others, and certainly not to myself.

That's the way it seems, anyway. Maybe my negativity has blinded me, given me temporary amnesia when it comes to remembering the kind and thoughtful and generous things I've done. But when I went through my book and consciously tried to add a few anecdotes that were more hopeful, more joyous, more uplifting and inspiring, I drew a blank.

That's not completely true. I was able to find some inspiration in the accomplishments of others. I've had the privilege of meeting great people and witnessing legendary performances. I've seen history being made and maybe even made a little myself.

But all of it has left me strangely unmoved and, I'm tempted to say, untouched. I know the latter can't be true. George Orwell said that by the age of 50 every man has the face he deserves, and while I'm not sure I want to accept full responsibility for that sourpuss staring back at me in the mirror some mornings, I can't deny that life has left its mark there.

I digress, another of my characteristic and perhaps slightly more endearing faults. My whole life has been a digression, it seems. I can't think of a single aspect of my life today that I expected or planned for when I was a child or a young man. For someone who's not fond of surprises, I've had little else.

Which is why I thought a story of my life might make good reading. For others, that is, not necessarily myself. People like spectacular ups and downs, even if it's mostly downs, as long as it's happening to someone else. It reassures them that their own rather more staid and predictable lives might not be so bad after all.

So I'm going to go over my book a couple more times and try to slip in a few happy bits, if I can think of any. Or at least some bits that might make others happy, even if that happiness comes from watching me make a fool of myself in a few more ways.

Then I'll decide whether I'm ever going to let anyone read the thing. It seems an odd thing to be wondering about. After all, I've been writing about myself, often providing far more information than anyone asked for, in *Lookout* magazine, *Maximum Rock'n'roll*, and, for a full 10 years now, *Punk Planet*.

It's a bit late in the game to get bashful, and yet there it is. For someone who's never been especially thrilled or impressed with himself, I'm suddenly very concerned about what other people will think.

Why that should be is a mystery to me. You've heard about the people who went looking for love in all the wrong places; well, you're looking at someone who spent his life looking for attention in all the wrong ways. I wasn't afraid to stroll down Main Street in Akron, Ohio in 1971 wearing green velvet platforms, gold lamé trousers, a lacy girl's top and seven different colors of eye shadow, but now I'm agonizing over whether people will think I've done a good enough job writing about it? Go figure.

That's all I have to say about it for now. Maybe in a few months you'll be reading this book I've been promising and/or threatening to write ever since, oh, ever since I realized I didn't know how to do much else. On the other hand, maybe it will disappear down the

memory hole and you'll never hear of it again.

On another note, I mentioned that I've been writing for *Punk Planet* for 10 years now. Since I've been here from the beginning, I guess that means this magazine is—wait for it—10 years old now. Happy birthday to us, but especially to Dan Sinker, without whom there's not a chance in hell PP would have survived past its first couple issues. It's been a pleasure and a privilege to be part of this enterprise, and assuming they don't wise up and fire me, I hope to be doing it for another 10 years. At least.

PS. I've just been informed by our esteemed editor that due to some weird math-punk calculations (and the fact that one year PP published seven issues), this isn't *really* our 10th anniversary, that that won't happen till PP#61. Well, be that as it may, who can say whether I'll be able to muster a similar degree of magnanimity and good cheer again two months from now? So the congratulations stand.



Hanging out downtown sometimes seems like a lost art. We're all so busy scrambling around for rent money or hiding from the out-

side world in our hard-earned, high-priced hovels, we tend to forget how important it is to just kick it.

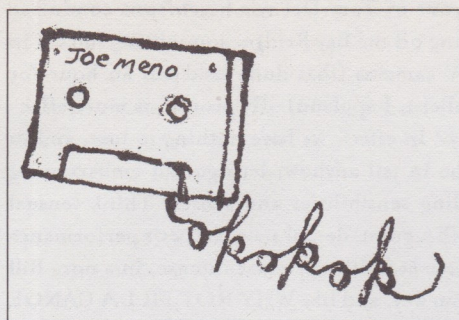
The sight of the boarded-up windows of the UC Theatre in downtown Berkeley are as painful and frustrating as a #2 pencil jammed in my eye socket. Tell me, what use is it to live in a city full of bleeding heart lefty do-gooders if they couldn't even save the oldest and coolest movie theatre in town? Where is the creepy guy with six-inch fingernails going to jack off now? Where are the high school kids going to watch *Akira* during their first acid trip? And what lucky vault now holds the John Waters French-inhaling No-Smoking, trailer?! The UC Theatre was part film education and part freak sanctuary. Even when the punks set fire to the women's bathroom during the midnight showing of *Rock N Roll High School*, the UC didn't hold a grudge for too long. One week, they held a William Castle movie marathon. When the Castle horror movies came out in the '50s, each one came equipped with a gimmick to lure in the kiddies. Sometimes a movie would provide a money-back guarantee in case anyone got too scared to stay through the ending. Other times, there would be electric shocks under certain seats in the theatre, rigged to go off during the scary part causing audience members to shriek and jump out of their seats. The UC Theatre tried to honor this OG William Castle feeling by recreating the gimmicks to the best of their abilities. During *House On Haunted Hill*, a raggedy skeleton hovered precariously overhead on a jerry-rigged clothesline, squeaking and jerk-

ing along, instead of soaring by with the majestic swoooooosh that had clearly been intended. During *The Tangler*, the ushers walked down the aisles carrying buckets filled with plastic bugs to pelt unsuspecting moviegoers. Now that's a business with style and heart! You aren't going to get that sort of treatment at any of the fandangled multiplexes left in downtown. Landmark Corporation, city of Berkeley—you fucked up!

My friend, Ravi, used to have hands-down the best downtown Berkeley hang out style. He and Sean-Dogg once plastered all of downtown Berkeley with hoopty, Sharpie-flyers advertising Ravi's detective agency: "Dirty's Detective Agency—no job too big or too small." The flyer instructed potential customers to find him at Neutron Donuts weekdays at 3PM. He would set up a discreet placard on his preferred booth that read: "The Detective Is IN" (reminiscent of Lucy from Peanuts' psychiatrist office), and await the hordes of customers that were sure to follow as a result of his overzealous guerilla marketing tactics. Too bad he forgot to mention in his flyer that he didn't have a car, so if you wanted someone tailed, it would have to be by bicycle. The poor donut store lady, who loved Ravi as her favorite customer, had no idea he was the detective, and attempted to enlist his help in tearing down the flyers. Like a wolf in a chicken coop, Ravi listened to her sad story of all the annoying people who came in inquiring about the detective, nodding sympathetically all the while.

I loved knowing where I could find Ravi every day at 3PM. I wish all the down-for-anything types would set up office hours where you could find them when you developed an itch to do something stupid and fun. I don't know where they keep themselves now. It used to be someone had put a shoe on top of the BART elevator, and we would leave messages to each other there. You knew you could probably find Larry at the Firenze cafe. Maybe you could find Jeff by the JANK box, or at the bookstore, brazenly shoving books into his bag, but keeping a low profile while examining all of the ladies' fashion magazines. Downtown is no longer a centralized meeting point for my friends. We've become fractured by geography and by adopting different priorities. My boyfriend works downtown now, and constantly complains about how bad Berkeley sucks. As the former self-proclaimed best punk tour guide in town, it shames me to admit that I'm at a loss as to how to demonstrate the better side of Berkeley. Most days, any corner downtown is guaranteed entertainment for me. Schizos will walk by screaming about a wide range of amazing and disturbing topics from yuppie bitches to Ronald Reagan's dirty pussy. A thrilling parade of people will pass by—people to hide from, hippies to shun, friends you didn't expect to run into. No matter what rooftop or not-so-secret secret tunnel under campus you discover, your mindset and having the right partners-in-crime is going to determine whether the action is going to buoy you up or suck you under.

Thanks to Sweet-ass Sugar Tooth for being such a fierce devotee of kickin' it. Write to me at PO Box 4047, Berkeley, CA. 94704. janellebenetramsey@excite.com.



Fifteen Minutes with You

We got forced to do a 15-minute debate against the death penalty in our eighth grade

English class. For some reason, I still think about the whole strange thing, even to this day. I think about it and I think about it and it is this one terrible moment, this one event that stands out like an explosive and fiery car crash in the back of my mind, something so random, so inappropriate, something so wonderfully bad. What the hell could we, as a group of 13-year-old catholic school kids, have added to one of the most smoldering arguments of our times? And what possible lesson in English could we have been supposed to be learning by participating in the first place? For fuck's sake, we were not concerned with questions of life or death. We were not concerned with justice or truth. We were on the verge of our formidable teen years, discovering we could get high by sniffing paint thinner and glue. Our lives were like sitcoms we watched, most closely resembling *Charles in Charge*, most probably. We had no connection with poverty, crime, racism, or the outside world.

In the same English classroom, with the old yellowed posters revealing *How To Diagram!* and flowery cut-outs describing the syllable count of a proper haiku, we were put into small groups and given the issue we would research and publicly argue in a 15-minute debate, to be held two weeks later. I got put in a group with Ed, a tall, awkward kid with a reoccurring nasty neck rash, and a punk girl named Jenny L., who scared the holy crap out of me. Jenny was short with dark hair and dead silent. We had been going to school together for eight years and I could not ever remember her speaking. All I knew of her was that on dress-down Friday she had worn a Dead Kennedys T-shirt, and some girls had laughed at her for wearing it for some reason.

As a debate group, we were told we would be discussing the topic of capital punishment and that we would be arguing against the death penalty. Ed kind of sighed, disappointed with the topic or the side we were forced to take, while Jenny took it with a slight nod, opening her notebook and jotting down, "We will win this."

I did not know how I felt about the death penalty because I hadn't ever really thought about it. No one I knew had ever been murdered; no one I had ever known had been sentenced to death by a jury of their peers. The issue seemed about as useless to me as any kind of science or math. I had no need for extemporaneous knowledge at that time. I was a raging fireball of hormones. If it couldn't get Amy, the girl I liked, who sat right behind me, to make out with me, it had no fucking meaning for me.

Also, the thing was, no one ever talked about the death penalty, either—at home, at school, in the neighborhood, at church—I mean, I had no fucking clue what it was all about, but from what I did know, it seemed pretty fucking simple: *if you kill someone, you should die. An eye for an eye and all that.* Simple teenage, junior high logic. Duh. The problem was that I was in the group that was supposed to be arguing against the idea of capital punishment, and forced to be in a group with Jenny, and I had kind of coasted through the last few months of English because I was too busy thinking of very innovative ways to get Amy, or any girl, to make out with me. So as you can guess, our debate group did not function at all together. Jenny was shy and, though she informed us that she was a standing member of Amnesty International, which I had never even heard of, she was completely and totally terrified of public speaking. Ed seemed removed and resigned to failing the assignment. And so fuck it: I went to the public library and tried to at least get some crazy photographs of an electric chair to freak the opposing group out with some gory pictures, but when I asked the librarian if they had any photos like that, she just shook her head and asked if I was serious. Yes, I was fucking serious. I didn't understand even what we were arguing and so I all I could grasp was some dude's eyeballs popping out of his head.

...

The debate, as you can imagine, was a fucking disaster. We were doomed from the beginning, doomed by Ed's apathy, Jen's paralytic silence, and my complete moral immaturity. And even if we had had some grasp of the issues, even if we had been able to rouse ourselves from our youthful stupidity, even if we had been able to speak marginally, we had no chance anyway. It was clear as soon as the teacher, Mrs. Anders, a reserved, morally righteous Catholic, clicked the stopwatch, whose side she was on. It did not help that Debbie Mangelsdorf, the nerdiest and smartest girl in school, was on the opposite team. With the same academic precision and attention to detail used to decimate binomials and square roots, we, too, were laid bare, Ed staring at his large hands, Jen, so wanting to speak—to prove that this idea, of the existence of a death sentence in a imperfect justice system was a mistake, but only sitting there, glowering—and me, finally, out of exhaustion and frustration, standing up and drawing a picture of someone's head being fried by bolts of lightning, before the teacher began yelling at me. At the end of the 15 minutes, Mrs. Anders clicked the watch and, without any deliberation, announced the pro-death penalty team were the victors. The class bell rang suddenly. We crawled from our desks and our deaths into the loud chaos of the hallway.

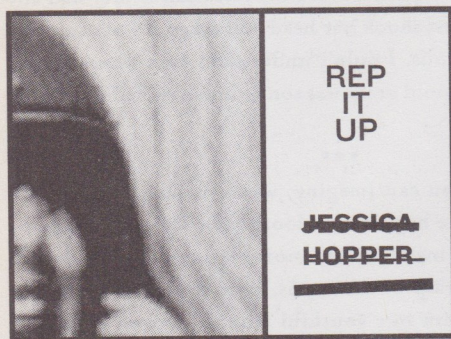
Outside the classroom, by her locker, Jenny was crying. I had no idea why. It kind of scared me, seeing a girl cry, so I said, "Well, nice try," or something like that and walked away, dumb, down the hall. I did not look back or think about it for another second until, at the end of the school year, I was given a marginally passing grade. I did sometimes, alone, go over the debate in my head, coming up with the

right words, the right phrase that completely blew Debbie Mangelsdorf and my teacher away, but I did that with almost all of the social interactions in which I was completely humiliated.

...

Three years later, I was a junior in high school, and someone gave me a mix tape that had "Holiday in Cambodia" and "Nazi Punks Fuck Off" on it, by the Dead Kennedys. When I heard the tape, I immediately thought of Jenny. I thought I finally understood why she had been crying that day and it made me feel awful for not knowing better: about her, about the debate, about everything. Then it made me glad, glad there had been someone, as young and smart and fucking emotionally intelligent as she was, all the way back in eighth grade. It meant that, coming into contact with someone like that, for one brief moment and being changed, even three years later, well, there might be hope for me, or anybody.

Drop me a line sometime: joe@bailmag.com



Predilections, Redirections, Convintions in the 004

BY J "JHOVAH THE
MILLION DOLLAR
RAPPER" HOPPER

A lot of people
talk about

leaving the country if Bush gets reelected. I think maybe three people I know will do it, and they all have dreadlocks, which means, well, they are committed, possibly stoned, and definitely anarchists, so let's not waste time to question their follow-through. But, the rest of us . . . we are not moving. We are *so* not moving. We will still be depressed by the USA's somnambulant Diet Coke stupor, its armchair apathy, our country's overall disgusting gluttony and the fact that as upper/lower middle class white people, *nothing* really is impacting our lives except whatever sadness wells up in us when we hear about Iraqi civilian deaths and whatever fucked-up shit we are perpetrating and duplicating and botching and full-force ignoring in our immediate personal-life-bubble—*ANYHOW*, we will only feel slightly less involved if we are in Germany or Canada. We're all too profoundly comfy to actually up the ante and answer the question "love it or leave it?" Bald eagles are dancing on our asses no matter where we scuttle off to. By virtue of our American skins, we are not afforded moral high ground any longer.

I think throwing a shit covered brick at a motorcade (is that illegal to mention?), or building a fort of used tampons, while clad in flip flops and a stars-'n'-stripes Speedo, wrapped in a bloody Iraqi flag and crying and crying till you cannot cry anymore—set up shop on that action right there in back of the

Whitehouse, or in front of Tom DeLay's beachfront condo, or before perhaps jumping off the Bay Bridge, committing suicide in front of live local TV cameras (that dude held out an hour for CNN, which as a publicist, I applaud)—IN protest, is more effective and way less pussy.² In effect, we have nothing to lose, and in a few years we'll all be in jail anyhow: let's go out embarrassing ourselves and offending sensibilities and senses. Think sensual commotion. Think NEA grant-denial style late '80s performance art meets *worst idea you ever had*.³ It's way more intense, in a non-Bill O'Reilly sensationalism way, and like WHY NOT FILL A CANOE UP WITH ROTTING MEAT AND ROADKILL, put it on wheels, paint SS MAD COW on the side and, using a plunger as an oar, roll in laps around Capitol Hill till you're tired and vomiting. Can you think of a reason not to do that, especially with the price of beef so cheap these days?

I think 004 is about refusing money to do the things you love that you'd be doing for free anyways—whatever that may be to you: DJing a birthday party, making art, having sex with strange women, crafting scented candles, publishing an ezine.

Think about getting paid to do what you would be doing anyways for free: your hobby is then seeking money instead of letting the true edification and expression of your total humanity, your soul and your inchoate talents—be your reward. Resigning yourself to being for-pay only will destroy your being—it is the capitalist gang bang of the endtimes. Doing things for free, at a loss even, and accepting graciously that PROFIT cannot be a result or even an aim of the action—it frees you!⁴ Try it, you will really like it.⁵ It's like being an outlaw from social construct, even if just for a minute.

You can make money being an artist, being in a band, making exploitative goals with your creative bounty.⁶ People get to a certain place with their work where it becomes "worth money." It becomes, in the staid parlance, "commercially viable," meaning it transmigrates from MY SPECIAL AMATEUR HOBBY into THING WORTH \$4,000 OR \$7,000 DOLLARS TO ANOTHER PERSON. Is that validation?⁷ Bands and DJs and the like—they deem that their expression, involvement, their potential to entertain an audience has a HARD DOLLAR COST to it, which is really fascinating to me. It's about other people making it "worth your time."

SO . . .

Do you ever wonder what your time is worth? Like, per hour?

Is that value reflected in the relative wage scales for your various hobbies, real jobs, and art expressions?

What would you pay for the day you just lived through, if you had to pay cash for it? Would you buy it off eBay?

What would you pay for your favorite album? Is the experience of that album, of loving it, what it did for you—is it worth more money than you have, or are we talking like, \$250?

What would you pay, relative to its true value to your soul, your day, your year, your development as a human, to read the next issue of *Punk Planet*?

What would you pay to get back the 11 minutes you just spent reading this?

What is the approximate lifetime value of your input to the world? Is the value increasing or decreasing?

2004 is the year to assess, and then deny it all. Good luck and fare thee well!

...

Pre-post script: In the last issue of *Punk Planet*, there was an interview I did with Sean Daley, aka Slug from Atmosphere, which was a fairly long q&a dealing, in part, with a female fan who was raped and murdered at one of his shows. There was a lengthy introduction to the interview, which a good number of people have commented to me that they appreciated or connected with. In the sake of honesty and clarity and not fooling people—despite my name being on it—the introduction was written by PP publisher Dan Sinker. I turned in an intro that was weird, poetic, and not particularly informative, turned in at the fringe of the final deadline. What I was trying to get at, and some of this showed up in the intro, was that what we ask of people in bands, or music-star-hero people is bullshit; it's pressure and most people in bands are egotistical and insecure and cowardly just like us. It was about being human and failing, and flailing, and how we really like to see people succeed as well as fail, and we like to be able to see it from the cheap seats. I am not sure how much that related to the actual interview that ran. The original interview was 80 percent off the record, with breaks of Sean audibly crying and then, later, asking me out (I gotta man, thanks). He veered from extra-human to sweet to media-savvy manipulative. And that's what it was.

Dan's intro was far more elucidating and also, served the interview well. This is what editors do: they change yr diapers. This is pretty standard: my parents are both editors, I am used to it and not upset by it. The only part I take umbrage with is that in the pauses, I never told Sean that we must go on. I offered to stop the interview numerous times, whenever he would get particularly emotional. I also would *never, ever* call myself a journalist, claim to have journalistic integrity, nor try to maintain distance. Generally, when I interview people, I try and core them and peel them as best I can. Secondly, I was never verging on tears, or trying not to cry during the interview. That plays for good effect, very feminine-softness, but that's not where I was at. I am saying this not to embarrass Dan or PP, but simply because I feel like honesty is called for in the situation.

...

FUSSNOTE 1 My assumption on the class and race of you, dear reader, is based on the fact that the majority of letters I get are from admittedly middle class honky boys. Word up to the super rich as well as to my Latina fanbase. You are not forsaken.

FUSSNOTE 2 Pardon my French. As a feminist, using the word "pussy" as a derogatory remark is not exactly reclamation, but I am working on it.

FUSSNOTE 3 Shortly after my 15th birthday, I bought myself a ticket to go see Karen Finley perform—this was post NEA debacle/canned yams in the ass bit—and it was the bravest, most visceral performance of any art medium I have ever seen. It was a deeper, more influential revelation to me on a feminist level than even Riot Girl. Why she is writing Martha Stewart parody cookbooks as social commentary now perplexes me deeply.

FUSSNOTE 4 There are a lot of fun things to be involved with that are profit free and strange and fun at www.learningtoloveyoumore.com.

FUSSNOTE 5 Also, if you want to just start by doing FREE things, search online or in your paper or call the library. Often times, the things that are free are useful. Architecture tours, Polish arts museums, factory tours, lectures on the history of salt, dancing instruction, meet and greets with the director of the movie *Barbershop* — yes, really! Do not spend your whole life staring down at stained bar-tops wondering whether you're an alcoholic or just a failure!

FUSSNOTE 6 This is what I help people do for a living. For the sake of disclosure.

FUSSNOTE 7 This is a rhetorical question. I battle this idea myself; in my business when someone offers me more than what my services are worth, I feel all shiny. ☺

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OK, people. My original intentions vis-à-vis this piece were: to write a lengthy, detailed, intricate theoretical treatise explaining why the above slogan ("George Bush Junior Is A Stupid Fascist Warmonger") should be utilized by the ever-increasing American political opposition in 2004, much the same way the Clintonites' slogan "It's The Economy Stupid!" was used in 1992 to kick George Bush Senior's ignorant arrogant New World Order Nazi ass out of the White House. But, really now... what in the hell would be the point of that? Anyone with half-of-an I.Q. point already knows that son-of-a-Bush squinting at 1600 Pennsylvania Ave in D.C. (thanks to CIA Daddy Bush's appointees/lapdogs on the U.S. Supreme Court) couldn't possibly match wits with the average American eighth-grader, let alone orchestrate a successful "crusade"/colonization of the oil-rich Middle East! So, I say, why bore my brilliant readership with clatrap crap that should be common sense to all already (except, of course, for those Banana Republican Americans unfortunate enough to be both brainwashed and brain damaged - *simultaneously*). Screw it... and screw them! As far as I'm concerned, those greedy goose-steppers can take their pretended patriotism and their four flags flying from their gas-guzzling, polar ice cap melting SUVs and shove it straight up their stupid inbred asses! Fuck the fascist!!! Give those unelected Project For A New American Century pricks enough rope, and rest assured - they will hang themselves. (It couldn't of happened to a "nicer" bunch of Nazis!)



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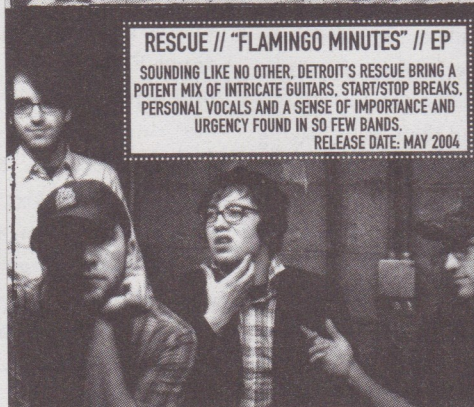
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HOME STYLE
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Timing

by Cat Altman

If you ask me, life's all about timing. Look at the folks who win the Lotto. What makes those guys so goddamn lucky? Nothin' but their spot in the 7-Eleven line. I'm telling you, it's not so much who you are as where you are, and when. The first time I saw Carol, she was standing in line for a train ticket to LA. I was in my Dharma Bums phase pretty good, hopping trains with the other tramps across the country. I'd been dodging railroad bulls for a solid six weeks. It was sunset when my Highball pulled into the Santa Barbara station and I jumped off to piss, timed it right, and hit the cinders running. I found a Magnolia tree 50 yards from the pay station to do my business. There she was. She had this crazy red hair and it was blowing up in the wind like a missing part of the sky that wanted back. Carol always liked to wear these droopy dresses, like pregnant women wear, and with the coastal breeze like it was, she sort of puffed up like this big balloon. I stood there, my thing in my hand, and imagined her floating up past the palm trees. She was paying the ticket lady and I was staring at her back, but I looked into the glass of the pay station and caught her eyes. They were green, green as winter wheat. I zipped up and hopped back on the boxcar. Best damn piss I ever took.

If you lay on your stomach with your head hanging off the edge of the open car,

riding down the coast on the back of a hot shot can feel like flying. To my right, Pacific waves spilled over themselves; and it looked like the tide was flooding the tracks. My eyes rode the glassy crests like seagulls and dipped into the swells that glided back to my boxcar over and over. I turned to face the left-hand fields. Grasses taller than a man did back bends in the wind. I thrust my head out as far as I dared and squinted into the green until I could see every blade and then every bug on the blade, and then I was the bug darting through the stalks. And then I was the boy, running through the farm. I missed Wisconsin. That day on the way to LA, all I wanted was to feel at home 3,000 miles away.

The train pulled into the down town depot. I hung my legs over the edge and blew smoke donuts at the fluorescent tubing overhead. And then, through the hollow of a hazy ring, there she was, her skin the blue of a gin and tonic.

Where are you going?

Mexico. Wanna come?

My aunt died. I'm going to her funeral.

Sounds like a blast.

It's not supposed to be a blast. It's a funeral.

Why don't you ditch the mourners and come with me?

I don't even know you.

Yeah, but wouldn't it be great if you did? Maybe your aunt died so you could be with me, so you could skip out of this sorry town and take an adventure with me.

That's the most egotistical thing I've ever heard.

You just leave my testicles out of this.

She stood there with two leather suitcases in her hands and stared at me. She stood there so fuckin' long the passenger train took off.

Your train's leaving Einstein.

I dropped my head and shook it at the floor of the freighter. Then it pulled out behind the passenger and we started moving down the line. When I looked up, she was running at me faster than a bat out of hell. I stretched out my arm and yanked her aboard.

I thought about what you said, she said.

Her hair hung long and limp over her face like sleeping glowworms. She was breathing heavy and my eyes were drawn to her heaving chest. There was much to admire. She pushed her hair back and it looked like the worms had splattered their light fragments all over her cheeks, her nose, her forehead. Freckles everywhere you looked. Beads of sweat hovered over her top lip like raindrops clinging to a windowpane. I watched them hang until I couldn't stand it. I kissed them off.

Thank you, she said.

She looked happy, very fucking smugly happy.

You're going to get fat when you get older, I said.

I knew she would too. She had one of those milky young bodies doomed to fill in with half and half. That supple sweet ass

would one day resemble a bagful of cottage cheese. Guaranteed.

We rode to San Diego together, and then crossed into Mexico. I wanted someone to make me feel I was home, and she wanted to lose her virginity. It worked out great. We spent three months on the beach living off rock lobsters and pulque. I'd tell her about the harvest season in Wisconsin while she sucked the meat from a salty claw and we'd roast ourselves in the sunshine like a couple of chickens. She didn't ever say much about her life; mostly she wanted to hear about mine. That suited me all right. Seems like the girls I've known have all wanted to share every detail of their screwed-up pasts until I sympathize, until they break me. Carol wasn't like that. She was all about me, and even though we were sun worshipping in a world of Spanish speaking parrots, when I think back to that time I think of Wisconsin.

It was September when things started to change. Carol wasn't as interested in lying around on the shore anymore. She still did it, but she wasn't into it like she used to be. All she wanted to talk about was the farm. She wanted to know when I planned on writing my folks and where I saw myself 10 years from then. I'd indulge her as much as I thought was healthy, but she was starting to freak me out.

One day, I came home from a day of diving. A monsoon was moving in and the water was brown and churning with sand, kelp, and every other scratchy sharp thing it could spit up. I bagged three big boys before I high tailed it home. I walked

backwards all the way there, watching waves stretch taller than palm trees and crash like locomotives to the sand. The salt water trickled down my spine as I ran, making clumps in the sand with my feet. I kicked the door open, three bugs in one hand, jacked to be alive. And there she was. She stood in front of the stove, a scarf tied tight around that big beautiful mane of hair.

Where were you?

I rattled the lobsters at her.

You could have called.

We don't have a phone, Carol.

You know what I mean, Pete.

I guess I did. My time with her was up, and I knew it. When I looked into those green eyes speckled all in freckles, all I saw was my own reflection in their watery surface. Carol was gone, she floated away like a bright balloon.

Of course as soon as I realized that, I tried to get her back. And of course as soon as she saw me trying, she wanted out twice as bad. Isn't it always like that? But I told her. I told her what the problem was.

The problem is, you're not here, Carol. You're living in the past and in the future, you're all over the place. But you're not here.

I'm bored with this. I want more.

But don't you see, don't you see Baby? There is nothing more. We're just out of sync.

I want to grow wheat and drive a tractor. I want things to happen.

You're losing it Carol. Don't you see? What we've got is see through. Like train smoke, like sea spray, like a balloon in the sky. Time it wrong and you'll miss it. But click in, Carol, and fly.

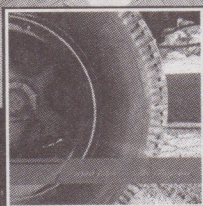
Pete, you're a nice person. I'm leaving.

She left. She bought a ticket for the Pacific Flyer and high tailed it out of Mexico in no time flat. I stayed in Rosario for another two months until an old fisherman traded me his boat for a summer of free lobsters and a case of American bourbon. I fixed it up real nice and now I charter it wherever I happen to drift. I'm nation-wide, sailing entirely by the current of time. Last week it took me back to San Diego. I haven't been there in years, but suddenly I found myself anchored off Black's Beach, watching Naturalists chase the tide. There she was. Rising up from the foam like an ocean goddess, her hair wound around like braids of coral. Her breasts swayed full and heavy, her belly swelled like a sail with one breath of wind. Two fiery-topped toddlers clung to her wide wet hips and she turned in the water like a windmill. If she had jumped into the present with me then, what might be now, I don't know. She lit me up like a Wisconsin sunrise in the same way she always did. My legs hung over the side of my boat and the wake it made caught her eye. God I loved her.

I knew you'd get fat, I said. ©

Cat Altman teaches at the University of Colorado, Boulder and writes magical realism. Her stories and essays have appeared in *Seeds of Peace*, *Eastern Horizons*, *Pinyon Poetry*, *AIM magazine*, and *Terrain*. She's currently working on a book based on the summer she lived with the only fully-ordained Therevada nun in Thailand, until she and the nun were kicked out of the country.

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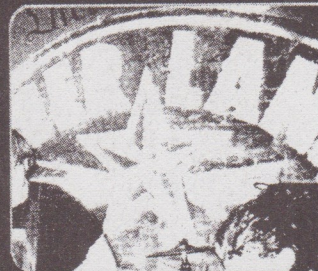


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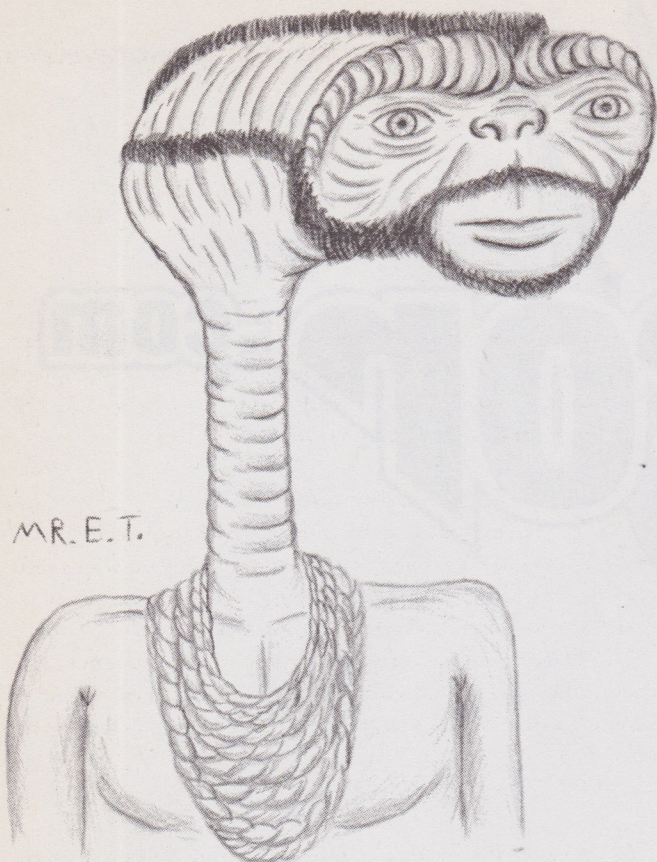
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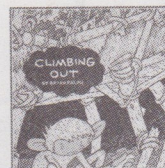
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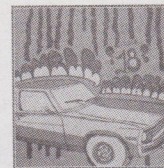
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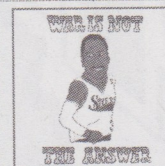


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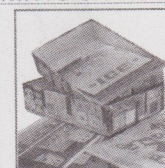


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Build a Fire From Scratch

By Becca Deysach

Every summer, I spend a week in the woods with all my relatives. For that one week, I feel like a bad-ass mountain woman. Despite the fact that more green things grow in downtown Chicago than the block I live on in southwest Montana, my extended family thinks that I live a rugged, Lewis-and-Clark lifestyle. "You have phone reception out there?" my Auntie Ru once asked. They are as amazed by my connection to the outside world as they are by my tendency to walk in the woods at night and eat fresh elk, but nothing impressed them more than my ability to start a fire without gasoline or newspaper. Their awe made me feel tough. But deep down inside, I knew I was a phony—anybody with access to sticks and a match can do it, even my cheesehead relatives.

What You Need

- A couple handfuls of dry pine needles, grasses, birch bark, or itty-bitty branches—the dryer the better
- Two or three handfuls of barbecue-squewer-sized twigs, 5-10 inches long
- A pile of sticks as wide as your thumb and a little bit longer than the twigs
- Lots and lots of dry sticks, branches, and logs, divided into general size categories from smallest to largest
- Matches (if you can do it with only one, you are hard-core!). Long kitchen matches work the best
- Your breath. Honestly, this is vital

Location

First things first: where will you have your fire? If you decide to have it outside, it's a good idea to dig a small pit or ring a cleared area with stones or bricks. Make sure your five-gallon container of gas and bucket of leftover hairspray cans are far away.

The Architecture

The most important part of a campfire is its structure. If it doesn't have enough oxygen to keep it going, it will die; but too much space between the firewood will also kill it.

First, loosely pile the dry pine needles, grasses, or kindling material in the center of your designated fire area.

Next, arrange the barbecue-squewer-sized twigs above the little kindling pile in the form of a teepee. Perfect symmetry is not necessary, but the teepee sticks should be fairly evenly distributed and close to the kindling. The more sticks you have in this teepee, the easier it will be to keep your fire going, but make sure you leave enough room for air to work its way through.

Now that you've got the hang of teepee building, do it again.

This time, use some of your thumb-sized sticks to build a similar structure above the first teepee, making sure that it is close enough to the smaller twigs that flames will be able to reach it, and far enough away that it will not smother the nascent fire.

Fire! Fire!

Now you're ready to play Prometheus. With your reserve piles of sticks close at hand, strike your first match and light your loose pile of kindling in several places. Remember the heat is going to rise, so light the mound as close to the bottom as possible.

This is the moment of truth—if the fine kindling doesn't light or quickly dies, you have to start all over. However, if everything is dry enough and arranged well, you should be ready to move on to the next step.

Blow

As the young fire starts to crackle and devour the skinny twigs, you must play an active role in helping it reach the next layer of sticks. With as much strength as it would take to blow out one birthday candle from a few inches away, nurture the flames with your breath, aiming for the bottom of the pile. If you blow too hard, the fire will dwindle; if you blow too softly, it will also shrink. But if you blow just right, it should grow large enough to capture the rest of the sticks.

Feed It

Your fire is now hungry and to keep it alive, you must feed it. Continue placing sticks on your original architecture, making sure that the wood is small enough for the fire to handle. As your fire develops, place slightly larger sticks on it, intermittently blowing at the now-forming coals to encourage its growth.

Once the fire is really going on its own, you may be tempted to throw that big log on it all. Don't do it! If you cover the fire up with a huge hunk of wood, all of your labor will be destroyed. Instead, work your way up to the large pieces incrementally. If you just can't hold back, use another log or stone to prop your log above the fire. Remember, oxygen is as important to a fire as fuel is!

Sit Back

Congratulations! Your hard work has paid off. Sit back, roast some marshmallows, and stare at the crazy things fire does. If you plan to hang out for a while, it's a good idea to keep a pile of sticks or logs at your side to throw on the fire as it fades. And if it dies down more than you'd like, don't forget the power of a good, hard blow. ©

DIY food EVERYTHING THAT

Breaking Bread part two

In my last column on making bread, I outlined the cultivation of wild yeast so this column could focus on baking. But first, a word about your yeast culture.

Getting Cultured

Trying to create cultures resulted in some crazy science experiments in my kitchen. The cultures I grew ranged from doing absolutely nothing to bubbling up and spilling out of the jars onto the floor. Testing the formula a few times gave me a good sense of what it takes to raise a good culture. Regardless of the specific instructions the experts purport, a good culture results from an innate sense of what you think it should be. I tried following a few different methods, from the detailed, feeding-three-times-a-day directions to basically winging it and I discovered there wasn't much difference between the two. I forgot a feeding once or twice, but because you can judge what a culture needs by looking at it, it came right back. It's a little like that neglected plant you find in an alley and nurse it back to health with some light, water, and a temperate environment.

Of course, only some of the time because one of my cultures *did* die—though I have it in the refrigerator in hopes that I can bring it back from its near-death state. Overall, I managed to cultivate a solid culture.

Activate

Once you grow a culture, theoretically you should never have to do it again. If the culture is in the refrigerator, take it out a few days before the scheduled baking day. It needs to be fed in order to bring it back. Throw out about 20 percent of the contents. This removes most of the acid, since only a little is needed for the whole process. Add back what you took out in equal proportions of flour and water and give it some time to recreate the magic. In no time it should be bubbling with action. If it's a thin culture, it should be frothy with bubbles. If it's a thicker consistency, it should be more elastic. From here, feed the culture each time it becomes active with bubbling or increased volume. The time between feedings is important. Once the culture activates, it is ready to go in about six hours. Again, temperature is important here: the warmer it is, the faster it recovers.

So now the culture is active and bubbling with eagerness to mate with some larger amounts of flour and water. It's time to assemble and mix up the ingredients. The first step is creating the *sponge*. Think of it as a jump-start for your yeast culture. This will increase the yeast population, allowing for a reasonable rising time. The sponge is essentially a larger amount of flour and water added to the culture. Recipes that omit this step without allowing the yeast to activate and multiply compromise flavor and density of the loaf.

Get it together

Using about one-half cup of starter, add flour and only about a cup of water. The amount of flour will generally average about four cups depending on the wetness of the starter. The consistency of the mixture should be fairly wet. Yeast has a quicker response time in a sponge that is on the damp side. It also responds to the temperature of the room and the water. If it's a cold environment, use temperate water—it should lessen the rising time.

Mixing ingredients takes the proteins of the flour and turns them into gluten, which attaches to carbon dioxide that helps the dough rise. Starches turn to sugar, feeding the yeast and creating the carbon dioxide. Alcohol is also created, aiding in the fermentation process. The best mixing method is by hand, but a mixer can be used. By hand, put the flour on a clean surface and make a well in the middle. Place the starter and water into the well. Using your fingers, begin adding flour to the well until a dough forms that is a little sticky and pliable. If the dough is too dry, it will slow down its effectiveness. The batter should become more elastic as air is incorporated into the mixture.

You knead it

Kneading is the next step. This type of mixing further develops the gluten and allows the dough to absorb the water. The lengthening and strengthening of the gluten in the dough will give the bread its structure, or *crumb*—the ability to stand up when its sliced. Kneading should be done by hand. Mixers can over-mix and deflate the dough, plus it's important to have a physical gauge for what's happening to the dough. Kneading also warms the dough. Ideally, the process should last about 20 minutes, which is a long time to work the arms—take breaks if necessary. Five-minute increments work, though the dough should rest between kneading for 15 minutes or so between sets. It's possible to over-knead. You'll know by the dough's sudden slackness and it will begin to tear.

The basic kneading process should be on a floured surface. Flour your hands and the top of the dough. Fold the dough from the farther end toward you, push down and forward, turn the dough and repeat. Add flour or water as needed to make smooth, elastic dough. After all this work, it's time for a break for you and the dough.

Rest up

Now it's time for the dough to rest. These are the last moments of absorption, which makes the texture imperative at this point. The dough will no longer have the ability to absorb liquid from here. Butter a bowl and cover the dough with a damp towel. The butter will prevent the dough from sticking to the bowl and the towel will

EATS, LIVES

by stacey gengo

prevent a crust from forming on the surface.

Locate a warm place for the dough to rise. The rest period further develops a lighter interior in the finished product. The ideal temperature is 85°–100° F. Temperatures over 120° F kill yeast. If your kitchen is cool, a stovetop or inside a recently heated oven will do. This first rise should take about 20 minutes.

Salt it

Now that the dough (and you) have rested, add some salt. Salt retards the fermentation process, which is why it's added at this time. The dough shouldn't be handled too much in order to retain elasticity and strength. Sprinkle about four teaspoons of salt on the dough. The dough should become noticeably stiff when the salt is added. Using the same kneading technique, work the dough until it feels warm—about five minutes. If you can pull the dough without tearing it, it's ready for the first rise.

Rise up

Put the dough back in the buttered bowl, cover with a towel and set in a warm place, just like the rest up period. This time the dough needs to double in volume, which should take about an hour. One way to check the dough for readiness is by pressing the dough with your finger. The indentation should not pop back immediately and the dough should feel cool on the surface. It is possible to over- or under-rise, so be sure the dough is ready for the next step.

Shape it up

Turn the dough onto a floured surface. Punch it down to deflate it—this closes up any air pockets. Shape the dough into your preferred loaf style, or divide the dough into a few loaves. Be certain not to tear the dough by overworking it; it's a gentle process. The shapes can be placed in pans or baskets that give the loaves patterns (which are the top of the loaf when turned out). I used a colander that gave my loaf a woven pattern, but any type of container will do, since it won't be baked in this vessel.

Rise up again

This is the last rise. The shaped loaf or loaves should be set aside now to rise again. Follow the same instructions for the first rise. The dough needs to double in size for the second time. To test for readiness, the finger poking method works here too. Again, this should take about an hour or more. Once to this point, the bread is finally ready for baking. The oven can be preheated at this point to 450° F. This should be done at least an hour before baking.

Prepare for the oven

Turn the dough out of its vessel onto an oven-safe baking surface. Be careful not to handle the dough too much—it could deflate. Gently brush off any significant amounts of flour on the surface. If there is more than one loaf, be certain to give them sufficient space on the pan. The distance rule of thumb is three-fourths of the width of the loaf apart. Steam is what gives the loaves a brown, crisp crust by caramelizing the sugars in the dough—it briefly cools the oven allowing the yeast to have a final rise-up before surrendering to the heat. Since home ovens aren't tricked out with superheated steam, an easy trick is a spray bottle, or place a pan in the bottom of the oven with a thin layer of water.

Docking

The loaf or loaves should be cut on the surface in order to allow steam to escape. Use a clean razor blade and make cuts a half-inch deep. Be creative—make a pattern. Back in the days of communal ovens, these designs signified a certain family's bread, so invent your mark.

Bake it

The initial heat/cooling is going to aid the yeast in its last rise, called oven spring. Just before placing the bread in the oven, spray all around the oven, or add a small amount of water, slowly, to the pan in the bottom of the oven. Don't add too much water too quickly. Shut the oven door. Open it and slide the bread into the oven. Reduce the oven temperature to 400° F. After 25 minutes, check the bread to make sure it's baking evenly. If one side is browner, turn the pan. If there is more than one loaf in the oven, there is enough steam created by the natural moisture of the loaves. If it is one loaf, spray the oven again, or add some water to the bottom pan again. After 35–40 minutes, the bread should be done. You can test the loaf by tapping the bottom. If it sounds hollow and your kitchen is filled with that familiar smell of fresh baked bread, it's done. Remove it from the oven.

Cool it down

In order to finish developing the flavor and finish cooking, let the bread set until it is cool—about 20 minutes. Don't give in to temptation and cut into it—the bread is still baking in its center.

Once it's cool, it is finally time to enjoy and reap the rewards of this long journey. It seems long now, but even with my few attempts, it's already getting easier. In no time it can become part of your pantry list of things to do. Just like making coffee or tea in the morning. And think of the benefit of dollars saved and expertise developed in the process—not to mention the fine taste! ☺

Get in contact: diyfood@punkplanet.com

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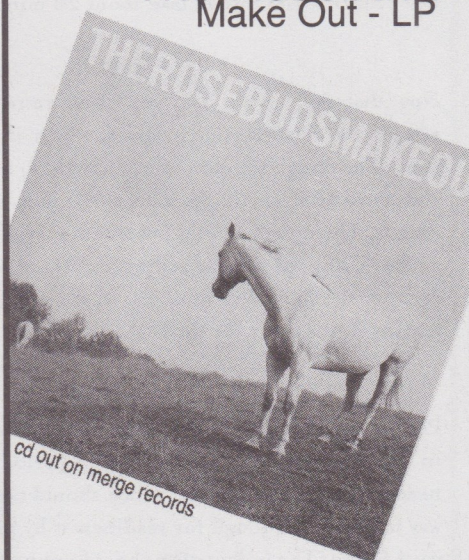
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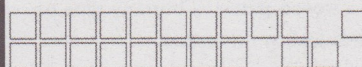
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Oceans and Airplanes represents the contrast and versatility that makes
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FEAR BEFORE THE MARCH OF FLAMES *odd how people shake*

Dynamic, chaotic and enthralling, Colorado screamo rockers drop their
debut CD. Thrashing around like a wounded animal, Odd How People
Shake is a potent sinus-clearing assault on the senses with enough
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clarity process *fluid*

Portland Oregon's Clarity Process drops their stunning debut CD. A perfect
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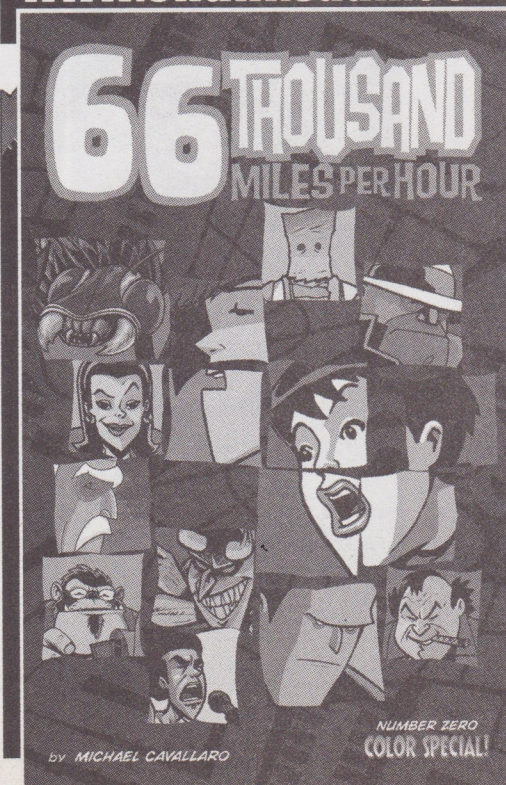
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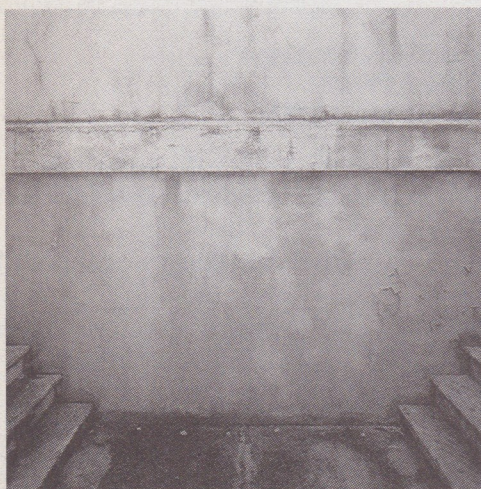
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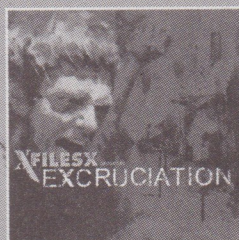
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THIS ISSUE'S REVIEWERS: Abbie Amadio (AJA), Eric Action (EA), Jay Castaldi (JC), Carla Costa (CC), Brian Czarnik (BC), Art Ettinger (AE), Ben Friedland (BF), Erica Gallagher (EG), Melissa Geils (MG), Julie Gerstein (JG), Jason Gooder (JIG), Dave Hofer (DH), Don Irwin (DI), Ari Joffe (AJ), Tim Kuehl (TK), Krystle Miller (KM), Sean Moeller (SM), Dana Morse (DM), Bart Niedzialkowski (BN), Sonia Pereira (SP), Rex Reason (RR), Neal Shah (NS), Dan Sinker (DS). Edited by Kyle Ryan (KR)

Against Me! – As The Eternal Cowboy, CD

This let's-start-a-revolution outfit with heart doesn't spit in your face to make a point, even with the strong, distinctive vocals. The band even tackles a few acoustic ballads with tact and precision. Despite some fans' dismay for the cleaner quality, *Eternal Cowboy* hardly takes away from the fact that the band is focused and self-aware. (EG)

Fat Wreck Chords, PO Box 193690, San Francisco, CA 94119, www.fatwreck.com

Air Conditioning – I'm In The Mountains, I'll Call You Next Year, 12"

This seriously sounds like standing underneath a hovercraft. Everything about this three-piece is completely overblown, creating a surreal, yet oppressive atmosphere. The production hinders the performance, but imagining this pounding fuzz in a studio definitely scares the shit out of me. (VC)

White Denim Records, 2247 Riverbend Road, Allentown, PA 18103, www.whitedenim.com; Peel Back The Sky Records, PO Box 234, Little York, NJ 08834, www.peelbackthesky.com

Alexisonfire – S/T, CD

Like fellow Canadians Grade (RIP), Alexisonfire plays some really catchy, slow- to midtempo hook-filled songs with screamy vocals. They add a little more melody with an harmonizing, nonscreaming vocalist as well. They're already rock stars up in Canada, being nominated for the "Best Independent Video" on the Canadian MTV, "Much-Music." (TK)

Equal Vision Records, PO Box 14, Hudson NY 12534, www.equalvision.com

All State Champion – S/T, CDEP

This EP was recorded in '99, but is just now seeing our nation's soil. Canadian post-hardcore that sounds like it's from San Diego. The vocals have a strong pop sensibility, but the music fights against it with changing tempos, dueling guitars and powerful melodies. Add pounding drums and throbbing bass lines, and you can't help but get drawn in. Some songs are head-nodding, some are toe-tapping, and sometimes they throw you off with an odd time change. But at least it shows you're paying attention. Six songs aren't enough, but apparently we can expect a full length soon. (NS)

Five One Inc., PO Box 1868, Santa Monica, CA 90406-1868, www.fiveoneinc.com

Alli With An I – I Learned It By Watching You, CD

Yet another pop-punk band trying to get on the bandwagon. There is absolutely nothing different about this band that makes me want to listen to them any more than any other pop band. I think I'll go listen to my Rhythm Collision records instead. (DH)

Law Of Inertia, 61 W. Fourth Ave., #125, New York, NY 10003, www.lawofinertia.com

Ambitious Career Woman – ...To Avoid a Lawsuit, CD

How can you not love a band with a song called "I After E except After Shut Up?" Stop/start-y, Drive Like Jehu-influenced stuff out of Seattle. The usual screamy vs. spoken vocals thing with great drumming from Jay Waymire. I'd see 'em live. (JG)

Lujo Records, 3209 Jennie Dr., Morgan City, LA 70380, www.lujorecords.com

Amen Boozie Rooster – Lemon Ice Box Pie, 7"

Amen Boozie Rooster's equation of equal parts bluegrass and punk is irresistible in its quirkiness. The drawled, wavering vocals work on this 45's title track, but are a little tedious and intrusive on its b-side. (CC)

Max Recordings, 1109 North Tyler, Little Rock, AR 72205, www.maxrecordings.com

America Is Waiting – In The Lines, CDEP

When I first threw this on, I expected more noise and weird shit—until the beginning of the first song. My gosh, how good is something that sounds so wrong in a natural order. I was hooked by this seven-song CD on the first listen. It overtook me like the first time I heard Drive Like Jehu. Many bands aim for that forward guitar sound, crossing the boundaries of playing and creating rhythmic noise. The vocals, which sing and scream (without being screamo), are also excellent. Jehu/Blood Brothers fans would eat this up. I haven't heard this style done this well in quite some time. Check this out *now*. (DM)

Die Die Diamond Records, PO Box 161925 Austin, TX 78716, www.diediediamond.com

American Princes – We Are The People, CDEP

This Arkansas band is hard to define; they formed in NY but returned to Little Rock. Their "Fireproof Press" type CD cover might have you expecting something from Chicago, like Shellac, and on some of the songs, they do sound like that. After a more meditative listen, the Paul Westerberg-type vocals hold for most of the record, though sung a little deeper. Thank goodness Little Rock is represented by someone besides Amy Lee of Evanescence. *We Are The People's* eight songs bring rock 'n' roll salvation. Give them a chance, because you won't be disappointed. (DI)

Max Recordings, 1109 N. Tyler St., Little Rock, AR 72205, www.maxrecordings.com

Amun Ra – Bloom, CD

Sarah McLachlan-esque vocals fused with the kind of jazzy music you'd hear when you walk by the organ store at the mall. There are some funky parts, trippy parts, bluesy parts and some that sound like singer-songwriter stuff from the '70s. These guys are certainly talented, but there's too much going on. (KM)

Self-released, www.amunramusic.com

Anadivine – S/T, CD

Anadivine uses the classic elements of pop punk without succumbing to the usual pitfalls: obnoxious group vocals, trite chord progressions and predictable song structure. Instead, they use tinges of hardcore bass lines and metal-worthy guitar solos. It's nothing revolutionary, but it deserves a listen. (CC)

Sidecho Records, 1215 N. Red Gum St., Ste. L, Anaheim, CA 92806, www.sidecho.com

Annalise / Gunmoll – split, 7"

First things first: Boss Tunage makes great-looking releases, and this split is no different: clear vinyl with cool yellow splatter. As for the tunes, both bands play very enjoyable Jawbreaker-influenced pop punk that is sure to get your toes tapping. Melodic sing-alongs for all! (KM)

Boss Tunage, PO Box 74, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19 2WB, UK, www.bosstunage.com

Angry For Life – Shakin' In My Boots, 7"

Angry For Life is a dark, melodic hardcore band from San Jose that includes three ex-members of Krupted Peasant Farmerz with female backing vocals. Their vinyl debut is fantastic, with a heavy Scandinavian influence absent from K.P.F. recordings. Definitely a band to watch for. (AE)

Vinehell Productions, PO Box 35131, San Jose, CA 95158, www.vinehell.com

Aphrodisiax, The – E Pluribus Moronicus, CD

The Aphrodisiax's album title says it all. Their bar-band brand of punk rock is overdone and outdated, but has its advantages. Their drinking buddies can probably appreciate the band's monotonous chord progressions, the high-pitched, bratty snarl of the lead vocalist and multiple drinking songs. (CC)

Self-released, www.theaphros.com

Arab On Radar – Queen Hygiene II / Rough Day At The Orifice, CD

The first two albums released together on CD from the band that sparked the East Coast fucked-up/experimental art and music scene. Slow, noisy, minimal, off-kilter guitar playing, odd time signatures and sexually deranged vocals are just a few of the things that made this band the kings of weird. (MG)

Three One G, PO Box 178262, San Diego, CA 92177, www.threeoneg.com

Argies – Himnos De Combate 1986-2001, CD

Punk rock is spreading, albeit slowly, as the angry Latin foursome Argies sound like they should be chugging Guinness in late 1970s England instead of wailing away against the establishment in Spanish. They even pronounce their words like The Clash. Their new greatest hits compilation, *Himnos De Combate 1986-2001*, is a blistering set



of in-your-face guitar music that sounds as sloppy and raw as it does rehearsed and seasoned. Argies layer speedy guitars, hooky melodies and hookier back-ups with a driving, dashing rhythm section—and an aggression to match. There's a language-transcending angst and bitterness boiling throughout these 14 songs, as an early punk vigor claws underneath. *Himnos De Combate* (Songs of War) captures the disgruntled layman's experience in a time of war. (BF)

Cochemomba Rekordz, PO Box 546, Randolph, MA 02368

Armsbendback – The Waiting Room, CD

This is the Hellfest, the Skatefest, the put-a-bunch-of-generic-bands-who-listened-to-Helmet fest kind of band. In their onesheet they are proud of over 10,000 MP3 downloads from two different websites. I guess they don't care that I think they are a second rate Jawbox or Burning Airlines for that matter. (EA)

Trustkill Records, 23 Farm Edge Lane, Tinton Falls, NJ 07724, www.trustkill.com

Ashen – Pull And Repel, CD

Ashen recorded this record after recovering from a pretty terrible van accident, but listening to the recording, you wouldn't know it. The vocals of Erin Akemi have an Ida or Retsin feel to them, but the music has a harder edge to it. (DI)

Two Sheds Music, PO Box 5455, Atlanta, GA 31107, www.twoshedsmusic.com

At Dusk – The Summer Of Promises Kept, CD

At Dusk's style of old-fashioned indie pop has points where it sparkles with mesmerizing melodies and intricate song structures. But for every track that shines, there's one that's lackluster. This record would work better as a stellar EP that maintained imagination rather than a full-length with too much filler. (CC)

Self-released, www.musicfordozens.com

Atkinson, Wendy – Trim, CD

Wendy Atkinson attacks, massages and creates low-end atmosphere on her new all-bass record, *Trim*. At times playful, mostly mournful but

always moody, Atkinson's bass songs are strange, pretty and laughable: the very essence of avant-garde. There's little difference from song to song, but, come on, it's only bass. (BF)

Smarten Up & Get to the Point, 1320 Salsbury Drive, #304, Vancouver, BC, V5L 4B3, Canada, <http://meccanormal.tripod.com>

Atlantic Manor, The – Failing By The Second, CD

According to vocalist Rick Sell, this is a "divorce album." It's appropriately labeled, as each of the songs on this somewhat distraught affair (no pun intended) reek of the misery of failed couples. Sell's voice is bitter without being annoying, and the music is equally sad and frantic. Look for the hidden track. (SP)

Do Two Records, 8321 SW 30 St., Miami, FL 33155, dotwo@bellsouth.net

Autumn Defense, The – Circles, CD

Delicate pop with substance that brings to mind the likes of Radiohead, Neil Young and Cat Stevens. The warm and cozy vocals shroud the tranquil, soothing harmonies with a tenderness rarely heard on indie record these days. Dare I say that this record beats their stunning debut? You bet! (BN)

The Arena Rock Recording Company, 242 Whyte Ave., Studio 6, Brooklyn, NY 11211, www.arenarockrecording.com

Autumn Picture – Fait Maison, CD

Canada's Autumn Picture (a.k.a. Hubert Taschereau) interlaces intricate, acoustic melodies with vocal and lyrical sincerity. The combination makes this debut full-length spectacular, especially for such a quiet, subtle record. Definitely the modest beginnings of a true troubadour sound. (CC)

Hill Billy Stew Records, PO Box 82625, San Diego, CA 92138, www.hillbillystew.com

Autumn Rhythm, The – Secret Songs, CD

There's a feeling of exhilaration that comes with discovering an amazing band who's been tucked away in some city (in this case, Boston), quietly creating a record that's completely astounding. The Autumn Rhythm is one of those bands. Valerie Allen's mesmerizing, ethereal

voice and Eli Queen's pitch-perfect, haunting melodies set the stage for delicately honed, heartbreaking narratives that are like tiny gems pulled out of their hiding place for a one-time viewing. Their dark ballads and clever, pop-tinged tracks express a vulnerability that's achingly intimate. As much as finding a record and a band like this makes you want to play it for anyone who'll listen, it also makes you want to keep the songs for yourself, like a secret told only to you. (CC)

Midriff Records, PO Box 294, Boston, MA 02130, www.midriffrecords.com

Awakening, The / Virginia Black Lung, split 7"

The Awakening is tree-hugger hardcore with extreme guitars and torturous screaming. Virginia Black Lung is similarly aggressive hardcore with anti-war and anti-racist sentiments. The split is supplemented with zine *Sea Of Steel* No. 3 about bike culture. (EG)

Ed Walters Records, 2416 S. Warnock St., Philadelphia, PA 19148, www.edwaltersrecords.com

Backup Plan, The – Dearest Whomever..., CD

Like many mediocre hardcore bands, The Backup Plan compensates for basic, three-chord rock with piercing screams. The band is at their best when they calm down and play the fierce punk rock. However, these 12 songs mostly sound too concerned with their own voluminous power than with songwriting subtlety. (BF)

New Day Rising, PO Box 1383, Miller Place, New York, NY 11764, www.newdayrising.org


Barnaced – Table No. 12, 7"

It's annoying when I stare dumbly at vinyl and become numbingly lost in its oscillations. What's worse is when the racket is hypnotic horn-led noise experimentation. Side one fails to engage (stuck on an uninspired groove), but side two tediously tinkers a sweet and forlorn cacophony. (VC)

White Denim Records, 2247 Riverbend Road, Allentown, PA 18103, www.whitedenim.com

Beautiful New – S/T, CDEP

Rocking post-hardcore that's catchy and raw. The singing is definitely HC style, the lyrics are political and meaningful, and musically they're

ABOUT OUR REVIEWS: We make every attempt to review all the records we receive (CDs, CDRs and vinyl only—so long as they come from a label that isn't owned/partially owned by a major label), but we reserve the right not to review something we feel isn't appropriate for *Punk Planet*. Also, due to the volume we receive, some records fall through the cracks. Feel free to send us your record(s) for review (4229 N. Honore St., Chicago IL 60613), but expect up to a five-month lag time for it to appear in the magazine. So send stuff EARLY, and include any and all contact information. CDRs that aren't advance promo copies from labels end up in our demo section. All reissues are also in their own section. Records marked with a little ear () are "highlighted" reviews, which means reviewers found them especially noteworthy (not necessarily good or bad). Finally, please keep in mind that if you send us your record, we might not like it. The review is merely one person's opinion, written without God's endorsement. Any questions or concerns can be directed to Kyle Ryan at reviews@punkplanet.com. Please DO NOT CALL the office, as Kyle is not there full-time. Thanks!



drawing from a range of influences wide enough to include Iron Maiden and Bob Seger. (The cover of the latter's "2 + 2 =" is badass). Good work, guys. (JC)

Capsule Records, PO Box 1861, Belleville, MI 48112, v_averill@hotmail.com

Bella Futuro – Empire of Dirt, CDEP

Tuneful anger that breaks rules and boundaries. This is what would happen if N.E.R.D. was more about seriously ripping shit up and not falsettoing all over Candyland for a Gucci-wearing piece of tail. Seriously smoking hip-rock that out-attitudes Lewis Black with 'tude to spare. (SM)

Makebreak Records, PO Box 12615, Olympia, WA 98508, www.makebreakrecords.com

Bench Warmer – S/T, CD

This really good band plays music reminiscent of the Clash, Fugazi and Television. What sets them apart is that this three-piece has really good dynamics between the musicians, and they sound really tight. I would say this is in the top five of the 15 CDs I reviewed this issue. (JG)

Self-released, www.benchwarmer.info

Benny – Our True Intent Is All For Your Delight, CD

Our True Intent Is All For Your Delight reminds me of my favorite early '80s California-style punk: It pogs, pops and jostles. The only difference is that Benny are Brits, and it's 20 years later. They don't offer up anything new, but it's still fun. (CC)

Boss Tuneage, PO Box 74, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19 2WB, UK, www.bosstuneage.com

Berlin Project, The – The Things We Say, CD

Poppy rock in the vein of every other poppy rock band out there. Some nice harmonies and catchy songs, but not enough to stray from the pack. (DH)

Orange Peel Records, PO Box 15207, Fremont, CA 94539, www.orangepeel.com

Between The Devil And The Deep Blue Sea – North And South of Nothing, CD

Album concept often compromises album quality, and BTDDBS' *North And South Of Nothing* only reinforces this notion. Expansive and ambitious, this six-part 65-minute timeline of revolution implodes in on itself, as the band's art-rock drone and screams are abrasive rather than creative. Songwriting first, boys. (BF)

Action Driver Records, PO Box 610, Toledo, OH 43697, www.actiondriver.com

Big Collapse – Prototype, CD

This transplanted California band features ex-members of Shift, Flashpoint and Burn. Recorded in San Diego, the CD has a lot of Rocket From The Crypt-type sounds. After being around the block so much, you'd think they'd come up with something different and better. (DI)

The Militia Group, 1215 N. Red Gum St., Ste. L, Anaheim, CA 92806, www.themilitiagroup.com

Black Print – Movement, CDEP

High-energy emo. The singer sure does scream a lot, and not a cool Rollins kinda scream. Potentially cool, but ultimately C-grade stuff. (AJ)

Quincy Shanks Records, PO Box 3035, St. Charles, IL 60174, www.quincyshanks.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Eric Action (EA)

V/A, *The Blasting Concept II*. In 1986, I was 13 and found this, my first exposure to the cheapo sampler, for a mere \$3.49 at the mall. At this point, I owned a few Black Flag, Minutemen, Hüsker Dü, Minor Threat, Dead Kennedys and Sex Pistols records, but I didn't discover other bands and labels until later. Although it's not the best compilation in my collection, it's the one that got me started. The best track is Hüsker Dü's "Erase Today," one of their greatest songs ever and not found on any official release. You also get exclusive Meat Puppets and Minutemen covers of "I Just Want To Make Love To You," and "Ain't Talkin' 'Bout Love" respectively. The Minutemen track is a slower version than the *Double Nickels On The Dime* LP-only track. There are some other great SST bands, Black Flag, Angst and Saccharine Trust being my next favorites. This embodies what a compilation should be: cheap, filled with exclusive tracks and covers a few genres. Before anyone gets angry, *The Blasting Concept II* is indeed a better record, but I didn't buy it until I already knew the SST catalog by heart. This record, though, got me to buy some really great (Pagan Icons) and horrible records (either October Faction LPs) on the label. I suggest tracking this one down; it's out of print, but easy to find. The CD sounds like crap, due to the analog mastering, so pick up the vinyl. (EA)

Currently I am all over the place spinning: New Stuff...Buff Medways, 1914; Against Me, *As The Eternal Cowboy*; New Bomb Turks, *Switchblade Tongues Butterknife Brains*; Oldies...The Rolling Stones, *Aftermath*; Negative Approach, *Tied Down*.

Black Rose Diary – Burned Bridges And Broken Hearts, CD

On Burned Bridges And Broken Hearts, Pennsylvania's Black Rose Diary play screaming, bursting rock 'n' roll the old fashioned way: loud. The foursome steamrolls through 11 songs sustained by their sheer energy rather than sonic quirk. Hammering electric guitars and throaty yells dominate and crush the more intriguing backup singing. (BF)

Self-released, 4416 Perkins St., Erie, PA 16509, www.blackrosediary.com

Black Star Brigade – They Think They Can Knock Us Down, CD

Rough and tumble punks from Texas play fast-paced punk rock with blazing leads and gang-vocal choruses. For fans of the Rancid and Swinging Utters style of punk. (KM)

Self-released, PO Box 41452, Austin, TX 78704, www.blackstarbrigade.com

Blacktop – I Got A Baaad Feelin' About This, CD

This sounds a lot like The Gories, lead singer and guitarist Mick Collins' other band, but has more of a swagger to it. The guitars and vocals also sound tighter and more soulful and less garagey. I think Collins' best band is his current one, the Dirtbombs, but I like this more than The Gories. It is still really lo-fi, sloppy and distorted '60s-ish garage punk. Anyway, I could go on and on dissecting the musical influences, but if you like this kind of stuff, you'll like this. It won't disappoint. (JG)

In The Red Records PO Box 50777, Los Angeles, CA. 90050, www.intheredrecords.com

Blaschke, Amy – S/T, CD

Singer/songwriter Amy Blaschke creeps and crawls on her whispery new self-titled set, exploring the various mind-spaces of sadness, longing and loneliness. Delicate acoustic guitars over simple, sparse rhythms set the mood for her warbled, embittered singing. Mournful and miserable, haunting and hushed, Blaschke describes a world of passing time, unrequited love and emotional unbalance. At perhaps her most cryptic and poignant, she sings "All the hate in you/ that I tried to see through/ and how many wake/ and then realized they called out your name?" on "Poor Old Man." But it's the melodic turns and dominating harmonies that give these nine songs their quiver and spook. The album climaxes with the repetition of "I am reveling" on "Sweet Song," where Blaschke releases all her anger, confusion and determination into a staggering, harmonized chorus. *Amy Blaschke* is a savory beauty: music to squeeze and keep close. (BF)

Luckyhorse Industries, PO Box 18127, Seattle, WA 98118, www.luckyhorseindustries.com

Bleeding Kansas – S/T, 7"

This sounds like an older Ebullition or Gravity release: hectic hardcore with elements of San Diego chaos and D.C. guitar work. There are some cool multi-instrument breakdowns and good screamed vocals that aren't indecipherable. I guess some members of End On End are in this band. Like the kitty litter, this is a fresh start. (NS)

Coldbringer, PO Box 65144, Los Angeles, CA 90065, www.coldbringerrecords.com

Bleeding Through – This Is Love, This Is Murderous, CD

You can tell that these guys are from Orange County with their sick blend of chuggy hardcore (a la OC brethren Throwdown), death met-

al and Swedish-style thrash. Some uninteresting keyboard crap is thrown into the mix for whatever reason, but I like it best when they're just bringing the pain. (DH)

Trustkill Records, 23 Farm Edge Lane, Tinton Falls, NJ 07724, www.trustkill.com

Blind Pigs – S/T, CD

Brazilian punk rawkers play straight-up punk rock. Influences probably include Rancid and similar band. Fans of the style won't be disappointed. This is a DIY release from the band's own label, which is pretty amazing considering where they're from. Songs are sung English and Portuguese. (KM)

Sweet Fury Records, Caixa postal 245, Barueri, SP, 06453-970, Brazil, www.blindpigs.com.br

Bloody Hollies, The – Fire At Will, CD

This is a clean-cut, north-of-the-Mason-Dixon-line version of The Legendary Shack Shakers. The psychobilly tenancies are right upfront ("Swing," "Tired Of This Shit") but there is a definite sense of garage rock ("I Need Love," "Penetrate"). The melding of both worlds makes for an infectious, hyperactive album. (EG)

Sympathy For The Record Industry, www.sympathyrecords.com

Blue Eyed Boy Mister Death – S/T, CD

Never judge an album by the cover or where a band is from. Formed with members of Birmingham, Ala.'s Molehill and None But Burning, BEBMD have got it totally together with a sludgy punk rock mix that will make any Sabbath fan wanting to upchuck at the thought of OzzFest. (DI)

Bent Rail Foundation, PO Box 2283, Birmingham, AL 35201, www.bentrail.com

Blusom – Go Slowly All The Way Round The Outside, CD

Made without any ambition of a public release, Blusom's experimentation with lo-fi indie-pop and electronica is a fresh and sincere breath in a game often marred by careless efforts to make a buck. Let's hope that this unexpectedly intimate, creative and imaginative release is the first of many. (BN)

Second Nature Recordings, PO Box 415084, Kansas City, MO 64141-3084, www.secondnaturerecordings.com

Books On Tape – Sings The Blues, CD

This is an interesting combination of slightly sinister drum and bass, dub and house music. I don't like most drum and bass, but this is hypnotic. It sometimes has a hard edge, and the songs have unpredictable structures, which makes it hard for me to turn off. (JG)

Grey Day Productions, PO Box 2086, Portland, OR 97208, www.greydayproductions.com

Brass Castle – Get On Fire, CD

If there's a state that knows how to rock, it's Georgia. This Atlanta band delivers a batch of raw and raunchy, Southern-fried music—a punked-up version of Lynyrd Skynyrd meeting Sonic Youth. *Get On Fire* is for those who like their music dirty, fresh, and interesting. (DI)

Drazzig Records, 788 Fulton Terrace SE, Atlanta, GA 30316, www.drazzig.com

Braun, Norine – Now And Zen, CD

This Zen-loving Ani of the flower-power set likes to rap and croon her winsome songs to the beats of tropical-sounding guitars, piano and erratic beats. (SP)

Self-released, www.norinebraun.com

Bricks, The / Two Days Of Freedom – split, 7"

Great illustrations/cover design. The Bricks are anti-establishment hardcore bunch that kvetches about cops, war and other sociopolitical ills. Two Days is more screamo and somewhat more melodic. "Flu-id" sounds like a Hum tune. (EG)

Ed Walters Records, 2416 S. Warnock St., Philadelphia, PA 19148, www.edwaltersrecords.com

Bobby Conn & The Glass Gypsies – The Homeland, CD

Glam-politico-punk? Stranger things have happened. Not as disco-rock as The Darkness, but with lyrics so critical of the current administration it would make the Dixie Chicks blush. "Relax, there'll be no warning for the next attack/ Relax, and there's a discount on your income tax." (AA)

Thrill Jockey Records, PO Box 08036, Chicago, IL 60608, www.thrilljockey.com

Bodies In The Basement – S/T, CD

This band's singer sounds like the guy from the Black Crowes, and they use lots of boogie riffage. Some of it sounds like The Heartbreakers, but it isn't as creative or unpredictable as they. This band needs to break out of a mold formed by other bands. (JJG)

Pure Poison, www.purepoison.com

Boss Martians – The Set-Up, CD

Super catchy power pop with equal emphasis on power and pop. Like a cross between Cheap Trick and Elvis Costello, Boss Martians have killer hooks, hot riffs and tasty keyboards all over this record. This is totally my bag, and "Kill My Telephone" is my new theme song. (JC)

MuSick Recordings, PO Box 1757, Burbank, CA 91507, www.musickrecords.com

Boys Night Out – Make Yourself Sick, CD

Boys Night Out is a very strange Canadian group that borrows from techno, hardcore, pop-punk and emo. They're missing one of the magic numbers needed to find the perfect combination, but the vocals are really cool, especially on the songs without vocal effects. (AE)

Ferret Music, 167 Wayne St., #409, Jersey City, NJ 07302, www.ferretstyle.com

Broadcast Oblivion – Transmita Olvido, CD

Coady Willis (Murder City Devils) and Dave Hernandez (Scared of Chaka) grab a third friend and deliver the goods here with full-bodied pop songs that spiral into uncharted territory when you least expect it. Styles range from seemingly light melodious material to aggressive post-punk antics. More a meeting of the minds than a "too many cooks" scenario, these diverse musicians fuse their varied rock tastes into an interesting and original recording. *Transmita Olvido* doesn't sound overly "grown up," and the songs stay nice and short. Possibly too punk for the aging rocker crowd, and possibly too complicated for the kids. But it's definitely something most people will love if given a chance. (AE)

Burn Burn Burn Records, 4040 Woodland Park Ave. N., Suite #4, Seattle, WA 98103, www.burnburnburn.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Amy Adoyzie (AA)

Violent Femmes, Why Do Birds Sing? Fuck introspective ponderings on your failed/veiled attempts at securing a spot between the loving arms of anyone—let's just get to the point. Gordon Gano says in 11 words what third-wave-emo bands have been trying to say in entire yawn-inspiring records: "Have mercy on me, I've got girl trouble up the ass!" ("Girl Trouble"). Now, how can you deny a man who can admit such pain in a voice so clear you swear he was speaking from your mouth? Highlights include the longing "American Music" and the never-satisfied "Look Like That." In the vein of straightforwardness, there's the "Do You Really Want to Hurt Me?" cover of Culture Club that would make George Michael proud. For anyone who has ever doubted that weird kid from high school, Gano wails, "You thought I was strange/ Well, just look at me now/ If you are lucky I'll play in your city" ("More Money Tonight"). At times the songs may lack distinctiveness among themselves, but that's the charm of Violent Femmes: bringing the repetitive set list of the street performer to your own personal stereo system.

Make-Out Mix Tape Must-Haves: The Amps, "Dedicated," Anna Oxygen, "Aviva," Atmosphere, "Reflections," Against Me!, "Walking Is Still Honest" and AK3, "Clavicle."

Broke Review – Oldtime-Futureshock, CD

Dan Melchior is giving Billy Childish a run for his money, playing super-trashy lo-fi rock that channels the Sonics, Animals and countless swamp-blues ghosts. Half these songs would fit nicely on any *Nuggets* volume, while the other half could get airplay on NPR's *Blues Before Sunrise* program. (JC)

Smart Guy Records, 3288 27th St #32, San Francisco, CA 94110, www.smartguyrecords.com

Bullocks, The – Ready Steady Cash!, CD

Still not a well-known band in the U.S., The Bullocks have been cranking out superior '77-style UK-influenced punk from their hometown of Düsseldorf, Germany, since the late '80s. The lyrics are in English with a thick German accent, and they're definitely the band's driving force. The new album is a stable addition to the band's growing catalog. There are a lot of bands like this one that are huge in Europe, but largely overlooked elsewhere. Their songs are catchy and commercial enough that you'd think one of the bigger U.S. labels would snap them up, but it hasn't happened as of yet. Some of the songs remind me of classic Dickies tracks, while others are more akin to anthemic early UK punk. (AE)

Wolverine Records, Kaiserswerther Strasse 166, 40474 Düsseldorf, Germany, www.wolverine-records.de

Cable – Never Trust A Gemini, CD

Cable play dirty, heavy rock 'n' roll with insane vocals and plenty of distortion. They have bluesy leads that recall the heavier bands of the '70s, but they're no doubt influenced by '80s metal. Listening to this record, I can't help but picture some sleazy biker bar where everyone drinks whiskey. (KM)

This Dark Reign, PO Box 30666, Long Beach, CA 90853, www.devildollrecords.com

Cables, The – S/T, 7"

Sorry boys, this is slow indie rock without any feeling. I like indie rock at times, but it normally needs to either be quirky, angst filled or super sappy that it sticks. This could have been a Superchunk 45 played at 33 rpm. It is slow and sludge-ridden. (EA)

Self-released, www.thecablemusic.com

Califone – Heron King Blues, CD

Serenely sonic sound by way of Will Oldham and Tom Waits. Tim Rutili makes improvisation seem like a natural occurrence in the wilderness; its beats and loops create a blues-inspired vacuum atmosphere where you are just chill. (AA)

Thrill Jockey Records, PO Box 08036, Chicago, IL 60608, www.thrilljockey.com

Camaro Crotch – S/T, 3xLP

An incredibly disturbing collection of three LPs (two live shows and a demo) served in a brown paper bag and limited to 100 copies. If you're into all-out musical chaos, this may just surprise you. Somewhere between Motorhead and Anal Cunt on the noisemeter, this is one angry screamfest. (BN)

Stickfigure Records, PO Box 55462, Atlanta, GA 30308 www.stickfigurerecords.com

Candy Sniper – Low Art, CD

It's not for everybody, but some people will really like this band's brand of amped-up, weird punk. Very dissonant, deranged music with "psycho-genius" type lyrics. It grows on you upon repeated listens. (AJ)

Running Riot Records, www.runningriotrecords.co.uk

Capdown – Pound For The Sound, CD

It's easy to see why Capdown has amassed a following among skacore fans in the U.K. and beyond. Their overall sound—on *Pound For The Sound* anyway—is assertive, beginning with the robust, loud-but-comprehensible vocalist who's also a kick-ass saxophonist. The sound/lyrical cues are definitely taken from Op Ivy, but who better? (EG)

Candlelight records, 2 Elgin Ave., London W9-3QP, UK, www.candlelightrecords.co.uk

Carrión – The Crime Of Idle Hands, CD

Wow. I didn't know that qualifier (death, black, thrash, hair, etc.) free metal was still possible. To be fair, straight-up heavy metal today isn't the same thing as it was in Iron Maiden's prime. Carrión doesn't play as if grind, doom and metalcore never happened. Songs are solo-free and alternate between angular, riff-heavy chuggers and fast, double-bass speed attacks. (RR)

McCarthyism, 7209 25th Ave, Hyattsville, MD 20783-2752, www.mccarthyism.org; Epicene Sound Systems, www.epicenesoundsystems.com

Caslotone For The Painfully Alone – Twinkle Echo, CD

CFTP basically pick it up where the Postal Service left off: love songs done with only keyboards and drum machines. This is the nerdier version of Atom/Package, if that was possible. The smart arrangements and decent playing just don't do it for me—but I don't like the Postal Service, either. (DM)

Tomlab, c/o Tom Steidle, Bismarckstr. 70, 50672 Köln, Germany, www.tomlab.de

Catch 22 – Dinosaur Sounds, CD

Ponder this: Can New Jersey ska/punk outfit Catch 22 maintain relevance despite its revolving door of frontmen/songwriters? That question seems to be up for debate among former and current fans, but it hasn't stopped the band from releasing records. They uphold their diverse mix of hard-driven punk riffs with catchy, upbeat ska chords dabbling in elements of jazz, R&B, soul and funk. Although this release is hardly *Keatsbey Nights*-caliber—to the dismay of many—the potential for maturation and evolution is likely if only the band holds the current lineup for a few releases. Here's hoping. (EG)

Victory Records, 346 N. Justine St., Ste. 504, Chicago, IL 60607, www.victoryrecords.com

Cheeps, The – S/T, CD

Fans of the Motards, take note: The Cheeps are a rockin' band in the same vein. I hate to make comparisons, but it's a compliment. I bet in a few weeks this long player will grow on me, and I will love it more. Noisy guitars, crashing cymbals, distorted vocals and little added nuances (horns) make this a party record of a higher magnitude. All hail the Cheeps. (EA)

Slovenly Records, PO Box 204, Reno, NV 89504, www.slovenly.com

Cheer-Accident – Introducing Lemon, CD

Shit's fucked! Prog-post-rock, maybe? With two 20-plus minute songs as bookends, focus isn't exactly the strong point here. However, when the band digs in and plays a standard song, your patience is rewarded. There's a pretty good pop record buried here. (RR)

Skin Graft Records, PO Box 25746, Chicago, IL 60625, www.skingraftrecords.com

**Chevron – Diamond Sparkle Princess, 7"**

Instrumental and dirty "rock" not unlike if Ghosts and Vodka needed glasses. Lots of guitar noodling that ends up in some crazy combination of notes and slight distortion. The CD they included wouldn't play on any of my three players, which sucks because I wanted more. (DH) Schapendoes Records, PO Box 3547, Eugene, OR 97403, www.schapendoesrecords.com

Chickenhead / Los Canadians – Mutiny In Miami, CD

This CD is a compilation of music of the two bands recorded between 1991-1997. Some of the recording quality isn't the best, but this release is meant more for archival purposes. The song titles and lyrics are clever, and the music classic punk from that period. (DI) This Here Records, PO Box 481, Chattanooga, TN 37401, <http://thishere.cjb.net>

Chinese Stars, The – Turbo Mattress, CDEP

Former Arab On Radar members hauntingly scurry through darknesses of indiscernible origins. The throbbing of Eric Pauls' vocals turns every word into something sinister, with pirouetting guitars casting shadows all over the place. If Neal Pollack was a serious musician, it might be as brazen and shaky as this. (SM)

Skin Graft Records, PO Box 257546, Chicago, IL 60625, www.skingraftrecords.com

Chomsky, Noam – The Emerging Framework Of World Power, CD

Controversial political commentator Noam Chomsky lectures to a college crowd at Boston's Northeastern University. He discusses a wide range of topics, revolving around the 2001 September 11 attacks. The talk examines hypocrisy within United States administrations and is a must-hear for anyone suspecting foul play in America's administration. (BF)

Alternative Tentacles Records, PO Box 419092, San Francisco, CA 94141-0992, www.alternativetentacles.com

Christiansen – Stylish Nihilists, CD

Although it's not easy to make something innovative, it is easy to connect the dots. Taking your first steps in the direction of an influence is natural, but you have to outgrow it eventually. Young enough to do that, Christiansen will break from the trail of breadcrumbs The Toadies left behind in time. (SM)

Revelation Records, PO Box 5232, Huntington Beach, CA 92615-5232, www.revelationrecords.com

Chromelodeon – In The Year 20XX, CDEP

Memories of sitting at home in the basement for hours playing Mega Man and Zelda come rushing back after hearing these songs. The first, "Wily's Castle," is an instrumental that I swear could be a video game theme: dramatic, epic keyboards and crunchy distorted guitars. The second and third songs are also instrumentals, but with a slightly different feel to them. The fourth song is a 14-minute rock opera with processed, spacey unrecognizable vocals. This eventually leads to my favorite part of the song, at about eight minutes, where they add an accordion with a trumpet, violin, humming and some cadence-style drums. This explanation is pointless, because to understand how cool this is, you have to hear it. This is highly recommended. (TK)

Self-released, www.chromelodeon.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Abbie Amadio (AJA)

Built To Spill, There's Nothing Wrong With Love. Sure, there's nothing wrong with love until you find yourself throwing your significant other's Christmas gifts into the street. But at one time the whole idea of it was innocent and full of possibility. Doug Martsch captures that innocence to the point of heartbreak on "Twin Falls"—remembering what it was like seeing that cute little boy's shoes under the parachute in gym class or pushing down his thumb in a game of 7-Up. Martsch's shaky, idiosyncratic vocals add to this childhood feeling as well—a feeling that you wanted to know what the world was like before you were too old to give a damn. The album is replete with near-perfect examples of catchy, indie-rock pop songs ("Reasons," "Car," well, pretty much all of them) that are just the right combination of simplicity and wit. Not to mention Martsch's pretty, disorienting guitar playing gives me the same good-sick feeling in my stomach as the first time I heard Stephen Malkmus play "Summer Babe." The entire album elicits such a wonderful feeling of nostalgic weepy sing-along happiness. Ahh.

After weeks of searching, we've been reunited again: Fugazi, *The Argument*; Modest Mouse, *The Lonesome Crowded West*; The Cure, *Boys Don't Cry*; Sleater-Kinney, *The Hot Rock*; Stevie Wonder's Greatest Hits, Volume 2.

Close, The – It's A Secret To Everybody, CD

Can we get the hype machine away from The Shins and The Postal Service for a second? It's time to whip a frenzy around this band! I've heard those bands and Modest Mouse and Death Cab and Spoon and for some reason, I think these guys are way better. But I guess they'd be at home on a show with any of those bands. Let me tell you why. The Close play really dynamic indie rock that ranges from D.C.-inspired to upbeat and jangly to somber and low-key. But it's always done in an interesting way. The guitars really stand out. They have a similar to tone to that of Hoover, really powerful even with low distortion. The rhythm section is really strong as well. You could pretty much just concentrate on any one instrument and hear something cool being played. The vocals are soft without being wimpy. Then there are occasional keyboards and female backing vocals. There are a lot of different elements, but nothing is overused or used to bad effect. I don't listen to much music like this, but after hearing a band like the Close, maybe I should. (NS)

Moodswing Records, c/o Charles Petrakopoulos, 3172 E. Ponce de Leon Ave., Scottsdale, GA 30079, www.moodswingrecords.com

Coachwhips – Bangers Vs. Fuckers, CD

This album makes The White Stripes sound like they were produced by Phil Spector: super-distorted garage rock, with the vocals that sound like they were sung into a micked tin can. With only a singer/guitar player, keyboardist and drummer, this band takes the basic structures but makes them sound new, apocalyptic and demented at the same time. It sort of reminds me of early Pussy Galore, but still manages to sound unique. I'm a pushover for this kind of stuff. I think I've listened to this CD about three times and am still not bored. Highly recommended! (JG)

Narnack Records, 381 Broadway, Fourth Floor #3, New York, NY 10013, www.narnackrecords.com

Collisions, The – Talk Is The New Action, CD

These guys play a decent mix of post-punk, garage rock and blues. Rumbling bass, marching beats and growling guitars lay the groundwork, while the vocals alternate between blues howling and '60s swaggering. I'd agree with comparisons to the Stones, The Fall and maybe CCR. They mix a lot of styles together, but it all comes out sounding pretty good. (NS)

Windjam, 580 Harrison Ave., Fourth Floor, Boston, MA 02118, www.windjam.com

Colonial Excess – Built For Angst, CDEP

Too much is going on here, from frantic no-wave synths and guitars to industrial speed-metal guitars and distorted vocals—and all of this chaos in the span of six songs. (EG)

Self-released, 525 Yellowstone Dr., Colorado Springs, CO 80910

Complete Strategist, The – Willow Park, 7"

Time warp! These guys belong in the '60s. Complete Strategist is generic '60s pop that, at times, reminded me of Todd Rundgren. A weird release, but it's somewhat refreshing when compared to all the bad-ass punk rock circulating around. (KM)

Square of Opposition Records, 2935 Fairview St., Bethlehem, PA 18020, www.sofa.fakeindependent.com

Consafos – Such Is the Way Of Things, CDEP

Lovable indie folk-pop featuring a ribbon-voiced lead songstress, Stephanie Drootin. The band's repertoire wavers between stringy ballads and pulsating rock songs. This five-song EP opens with a meandering sound that eventually winds its way to a more defined mood that delights with skeptically sad lyrics and forlorn longing. Excellent crescendos. (SP)

Grey Day Productions, PO Box 2086, Portland, OR 97208, www.greydayproductions.com

Control, The – Glasseye, CD

It's like déjà vu all over again. While this isn't bad, it's pretty far from original. It's fast as hell, screamy hardcore with imaginative layout and packaging. The songs are well played and tight, but I'll be damned if any of them stands out. (RR)

Go-Kart Records, PO Box 20, Prince St. Station, New York, NY 10012, www.gokartrecords.com

Country Teasers – Secret Weapon Revealed At Last, CD

The lads of Country Teasers have yet to do something provocative with experimental music. Their latest features a lot of random noises and a partially recognizable beat. Lots of distorted, spontaneous vocals, non-sensical lyrics and sloppy percussion. (EG)

In the Red Records, PO Box 5077, Los Angeles, CA 90050, www.intheredrecords.com

Crack: We Are Rock – Cosmic Mind Flight, CD

I really liked this album of demonically twisted post-punk. There are some great beats on this disc, particularly on "The Skull." The songs are about all things satanic. Noting the line on "Baby Devil," "little claws tearing at my eyes/ little forked tongue licking my thighs"—sadistically naughty and appealing. (AJA)

Tigerbeat6, PO Box 460922 San Francisco, CA 94146-0922, www.tigerbeat6.com

Cranked Up! – A Call For Solidarity, CDEP

"When will you realize 'punk' is more than just bands?" We're asked that in the first track, "All Fucked Up." With each of these eight songs, it's clear that this group of trashy punks live on the side of punk that doesn't end when the amps cool off. Agitated and melodic thrash that's through being pushed around. (SM)

Creep Records, PMB 220, 252 East Market St., Westchester, PA 19382, www.creeprecords.com

Crazy Mary – I'm Not Going To Stop Touching It, CDEP

If the Waitresses went in for a folk-nutty sound, Crazy Mary would be their new moniker, no doubt. Middle-eastern harmonies, blaring horns, strings and organs abound. Songs like "Voice Of Freedom," "Land Of Jagged Mountains" and the silly "Knucklehead" really set this wacky group apart from the rest of the mod squad. (SP)

Self-released, 300 E. 34th St., 36th Floor, New York, NY 10016

Cream Abdul Babar / Teen Cthulhu – split, CDEP

Avant-garde artwork, keys and electronics on top of metallic screampcore, pretentious song titles, inventive packaging...is this a record review or a list of commonly associated genre conventions? You decide! (RR)

Hyperrealist, PO Box 9313, Savannah, GA 31412, www.hyperrealist.com

 Creatures, The – Hái, CD

The Creatures' former albums have been influenced by and recorded in such locals as Spain, France and Hawaii. Similarly, *Hái* was inspired

Creep Division / Desert City Soundtrack

by the dramatic jostlings of another exquisite nation: Japan. This improvisational-sounding endeavor kicks off with the moderately manic drum-crazy "Yes!" Like always, Siouxsie's "Creatures-voice" (characterized by lingering echoes, drawn out syllables and twangy, synthesized vocal chords) carries the wave to maximum speed. The second track, "Around The World," displays simple lyrics "Boat, train, car, plane/ Got to get there, running late" with signature dignity and the modest sexiness of an experienced traveler. On a lighter note, the humorous "Godzilla" croons "A giant monster/ He's so sweet!" and "Godzilla, I love him best." Overall, each song weaves together the standard Creatures vibe: kooky and wayward rhythms and the use of unusual instruments (even a hint of Tibetan throat singing goes on here)—which, of course, only add to the discerning listener's pleasure. A zillion stars! (SP)

Instinct Records, www.instinctrecords.com

Creep Division / I Want Out – split, CD

Featuring members of Good Riddance and Sick Of It All, Creep Division play '80s punk rock with hardcore breakdowns. I Want Out give you more of the same and also features dudes from Good Riddance and No Use for a Name. The music is top-notch, but there isn't a whole lot to it. (KM)

Lorelei Records, PO Box 902, Santa Cruz, CA 95061, www.loreleirecords.com

Crime And Judy – Vendetta Chants, CDEP

This five-song release does a mighty fine job of displaying a more than promising band's ability to conjure up kick-ass riot grrrr type punk. Think S-K. Female vocals wail loosely amidst swerving guitars, tribal drumbeats and drearly pretty melodies. The overall effect is danceable, a little '80s, punk and a lotta cool. (SP)

Latest Flame Records, 1638a N. Astor St., Milwaukee, WI, 53202, www.latestflame.com

Crown 10 – S/T, CD

Slightly funky elevator music. When they try to rock out a little, the results are a mediocre rip-off of bad '80s "thinking man's" hair metal. (AJ)

So Cal Records, no contact info provided, www.crown10.com

Curl Up And Die – ...But the Past Ain't Through With Us, CDEP

The follow-up to their stellar Status Recordings CDEP, this didn't knock me quite as flat, but CUAD are like riding a roller-coaster: terrifying the first time and a bit intimidating every time after that. You never know if this is going to be the one that kills you. (DH)

Revelation Records, PO Box 5232, Huntington Beach, CA 92615-2322, www.revelationrecords.com

Curses, The – S/T, CD

This is likable punked-out garage rock, but it seems like I've heard these songs 100 times by 100 other bands. "Child Support" is a great Ramones number with good lyrics about growing up in a broken home, but otherwise The Curses aren't really doing anything that sets them apart. (JC)

Empty Records US, PO Box 12301, Portland, OR 97212, www.emptyrecords.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Jay Castaldi (JC)

Rezillos, Can't Stand The Rezillos. Released in 1978, essentially the ass-end of punk's first wave, *Can't Stand The Rezillos* is just about perfect. They combined the energy and tunefulness of other UK punk bands like Buzzcocks and the Undertones with a deep appreciation of several styles: '60s garage rock, girl groups and '70s glam rock. Then they dressed it all up in the style of '50s comics and monster movies. The album opens with "Flying Saucer Attack," and the first of many insane bass lines by William Mysterious, in my estimation the best punk-rock bassist ever. Three of the album's 12 songs are covers, but the Rezillos had an amazing songsmith in guitarist Jo Callis. His mastery of the three-minute pop song would become known worldwide in the 1980s when he wrote numerous hits for the Human League, but that talent was already in clear on this album. He wrote edgy, catchy punk songs with excellent lyrics that painted vivid pictures and told great stories. Check out "Top Of The Pops," "(My Baby Does) Good Sculptures" and "Cold Wars." Fronting the band were two fantastic singers in Eugene Reynolds and Faye Fife, who traded off vocals to great effect and brought the tension of their real-life romantic relationship to the band. The recording and production are top-notch, too, capturing the energy and power of an amazing band at the peak of its game. I can't say enough good things about this record; it's definitely worth your time.

Fool, I'm all 'bout: Buzzcocks "Sick City Sometimes" 7"; The Figgs, *Ready Steady Stoned Deluxe Edition* CD; Marshall Artist, *But How Are You With A Sword?* CD; Maxeen S/T CD; Strong Bad, *Strong Bad Sings And Other Type Hits* CD.

Czolgosz – Guernica, CD

This sounds like '80's hXc political punk, such as early Government Issue. The message is pretty standard: smash the state, anti-fascist, kill the dictator, fuck Reagan, oops, I mean Bush, etc. They don't do it for me, but I can see a decent dirt-punk crowd liking them. (DM)

Rodent Popsicle Records, PO Box 1143, Allston, MA 02134, www.rodentpopsicle.com

Davis, Ben – Aided & Abetted, CD

Ben Davis sings like a breeze. The Bats & Mice member shuttled a bevy of musicians past the mics in recording this album of mild indie rock that has the charm and tranquility of Elliott Smith. Effortless out of the gates, Davis sweats the small things in this faux lo-fi gem. (SM)

Lovitt Records, PO Box 248, Arlington, VA 22210-9998, www.lovitt.com

Dead Heroes – Let It Ride, CD

This Detroit band plays fast hardcore streetpunk with a metal influence. The crossover sound should appeal to fans of Discharge, and this is a recommendable release to those who like it fast and straight-forward. Their lyrics are above average, as is the production. (AE)

Sin Klub Entertainment, PO Box 2507, Toledo, OH 43606, www.sinklub.com

Deadwater Drowning – S/T, CDEP

I am way too big a sucker for blast beats and breakdowns. With that said, aside from their somewhat uninspired vocals, Deadwater Drowning are a metal band, extra-chunky style. Super mean and depressed sounding, the negative lyrics lend themselves well to the music. Good for a quality aural beating. (DH)

Black Market Activities, 23 Rand St, Revere, MA 02151, www.blackmarketactivities.com

Dear Diary I Seem To Be Dead – S/T, CD

Reminding me of past greats like You And I and Pg.99, DDISTBD has a midtempo, screamy sound that is abrasive and melodic at the same time. The songs are supposed to be dates in a diary entry, so the name makes a little bit of sense I guess. (TK)

McCarthyism, c/o Josh Sisk, 7209 25th Ave., Hyattsville, MD 20783-2752, www.mccarthyism.org

Death In Graceland – Come On, Touch Me, CDEP

Death In Graceland's sound falls somewhere between the classic punk of The Dead Boys, the hardcore assault of the Dead Kennedys, and (for lack of a better term) the grunge of Green River. That's right, it's awesome! This seven-song EP has good grooves, crunchy guitars, strong hooks and a whole lotta raunch. What a novel idea: The tunes are actually distinguishable from one another. There's a bit of a wild, boozier vibe to the music, but it's also pretty damn dark, like when you mix whiskey with downers and lose your ever-loving mind. Matt, the singer, belts out lyrics about alcohol, blood, murder and chicks in a snotty, slurred voice that meshes perfectly with the two guitars, bass and drums. This five-piece has a firm understanding of sonic texture. They know when to hold back and when to let loose, and their change-ups aren't excessively jarring, either. The songs are written and arranged so well that they're instantly catchy without being obvious. Killer stuff. (AJ)

Formula 47 Records, 8165 Glenmill Court, Cincinnati, OH 45249, www.formula47.com

Death Wish Kids – Discography, CD

A great collection from the band that spawned such notable greats as Pretty Girls Make Graves and Murder City Devils. Both of their 7-inches are on this CD, 11 subversive hardcore screamers altogether. This is what was going on long before *Spin* and *Rolling Stone* started using the term "screamo." (MG)

Aerodrome, PMB 133, 302 Bedford Ave., Brooklyn, NY 11211, www.aerodromerecords.com

Defcon Five, The – S/T, CD

I like the packaging of this CD: a flat black spray-painted tin with the words "THE DEFCON FIVE" on it in white spray paint. Inside was a note, written by hand with a black Sharpie that says "Dear benevolent review-lackey: This digital disc is available \$3 ppd from: The Defcon Five PO Box 6092 Hamden, CT., 06514. Thanks—Have an action packed day! Los Defcon Cinco!" Watch out who you're calling review-lackey, pal. I'll forgive you because your extremely lo-fi, wanton garage noise got me rocking in my chair. You can't lose for \$3. (JG)

Self-released, thedefconfivepower@hotmail.com

Defiant Trespass / Cold Like December – split, 7"

Defiant Trespass offers three interesting, political punk/hardcore tracks, a little too gritty and sloppy for my ears. Cold Like December does a slower, rhythmic, and intense style of hardcore that brings warm memories of Ebullition's earlier catalog. (MG)

Square of Opposition Records, 2935 Fairview St., Bethlehem, PA 18020, www.sofa.fakeindependent.com

Delegates, The – We All Taste The Same, CD

Canadian punk with horns and slight ska tenancies. Political/emo lyrics fronted by vox similar to El Hefe (NOFX). Album highlight: "Final Countdown" (Europe) cover. "World Without Hate" is evidence they know their ska. More please! (EG)

Self-released, 4000 de Maisonneuve W. #2302, Montreal, Quebec, H3Z 1J9, Canada, www.thedelegates.org

Desa – Demonstrates Birth, CDEP

Five of the six former members of Link 80 finally realized that the third wave of ska/punk is dead, so they regrouped and formed a melodic emo/punk band. This four-song EP is pretty standard. Jump on that bandwagon, guys. You're almost cool again. (TK)

Substandard Records, PO Box 310, Berkeley CA 94701, www.substandard.com

Desa – Year In A Red Room, CD

Desa evolved from the ashes of Berkeley's Link 80, but I guess they started in a new direction. This isn't a ska band, but a Bay Area pop-punk band. The songs are really good and additive in a cool way. (DI)

Substandard Records PO Box 310, Berkeley, CA 94701, www.substandard.com

Desert City Soundtrack – Funeral Car, CD

Few subgenres are more melodramatic than screamo, and DCS's use of piano accentuates the drama. Opener "My Hell" had me hoping they could pull it off, but DCS can't escape generic screamo. The prominent use of piano is an interesting idea, but *Funeral Car*'s 48 minutes feel like twice that. (KR)

Deep Elm Records, PO Box 36939, Charlotte, NC 28236, www.deepelm.com



Desert Sessions – Volumes 9 & 10, CD

New stuff from Josh Homme's (Queens Of The Stone Age) side project. This time around, the revolving line-up includes PJ Harvey and Twiggy Ramirez, among others. Like the previous Desert Sessions releases, these volumes feature an eclectic grab-bag of styles, ranging from funky, psychedelic jams to bluesy, acoustic instrumentals to groovy stoner rock. Most of it is different enough from QOTSA to warrant the separate nomenclature. Even if you haven't been too impressed by the recent QOTSA stuff, you may dig this. (Personally, QOTSA lost me after that first album.) If you're not up on any of the stuff I'm talking about, skip this release and go find music from Homme's old band, Kyuss. (AJ) Ipecac Recordings, PO Box 1197, Alameda, CA 94501, www.ipecac.com

Despistado – The Emergency Response, CDEP

This is a great record, six songs of off-kilter and frenetic punk with a lot of melody, for fans of bands like Black Eyes and Q And Not U. (MG) Does Everyone Stare? Records, PO Box 35004, Edmonton, T5K 2R8, Canada, www.doeseveryoneastare.com

Despite All This... – S/T, CD

It's albums like this one that remind me why I got into punk in the first place. A totally unknown band from the middle of nowhere (OK, near Atlanta) emerges with an absolutely impeccable debut. Like a tougher version of early Jawbreaker, only with slightly rougher vocals, Despite All This is a thoroughly outstanding band with incredibly conceived songs. The vocalist is distinct, and he croons the poetic, mildly political/severely personal lyrics with provocative intensity. For a new band, they steer into dangerous turf by writing a few long songs (the last song runs over seven minutes), but they're so good at crafting multiple bridges and changes that even these songs sustain the band's energy level. If A Radio With Guts is the band of today that's picking up where Jawbreaker's mellower side left off, Despite All This is the band that's picking up on Jawbreaker's harder side. This is the kind of album that makes you tell everyone you know to listen to it right away, as soon as you "discover" it. It's *that* fucking good. (AE)

Self-released, c/o Justin Gilbert, 175 Partridge Pl., Fayetteville, GA 30215, rejekt66@hotmail.com

Destroyed, The – Outta Control, CD

These new tracks from Boston's short-lived punk pioneers, The Destroyed, have the guttural drive that made raucous nights in sweaty clubs the stuff of punk legend. Even better are the previously unreleased bonus tracks from '77-'79. Their primal sound and buoyancy are can't be recreated. (CC)

Self-released, www.thedestroyed.com

Devine, Kevin – Make The Clocks Move, CD

In opener "Ballgame," the frontman of The Miracle of '86 sings, "and I know the kids with his guitar/ so drunk and anxious/ has been done to death/ so tell me what hasn't/ I'll try it." Yeah, but if it sounds this good, who cares? Devine has quite a bit going for him. For one, his lyrics are excellent—self-effacing (but not obnoxiously so) and endearingly sweet (but not saccharine). See "Not Over You Yet." His warbly vocals, with their natural vibrato, give the record a nice "everyman" feel. Topping it all, perhaps, is the undeniable catchiness

of *Make The Clocks Move*. Even though this is mostly acoustic, Devine doesn't tone down his vocals—he shouts just like he has his band behind him, and that sets him apart from the mumbling of someone like Elliott Smith (who nevertheless heavily influenced Devine). There is some rock, too, like the end of "Nose Dressed Like A Necklace," which cheats with some electric guitar. Again, it's all been done to death, but I don't care. The only thing that bugs me, really, is the obnoxious overuse of the Sand typeface everywhere on this thing. Yuck. I'll save my design critiques for another forum, though. Get this. (CD features enhanced content.) (KR)

Triple Crown records, 331 W. 57th St., #472, New York, NY 10019, www.triplecrownrecords.com

Dilute / Hella – split, CD

Dilute is an instrumental four-piece that sets the art of rocking-out standard one notch higher. The session never tames, and the electricity among the players could light a small town. Hella is equally energetic, but with an artillery of only frantic guitars and vigorous drumming, the play between musicians borders monotony. (EG)

Sick Room Records, PO Box 47830, Chicago, IL 60647, www.sickroomrecords.com

Diskords, The – Heart Full Of Napalm, 7"

Fuck! The Diskords are in junior high, but play garage rock in the vein of the Riffs as if they've been at it for years. Think a male version of the early Donnas records, only not quite as lo-fi. Fun songs with snotty, '77 lyrics highlight this must-have release. (AE)

Vinyl Warning / self-released, PO Box 2991, Portland, OR 97208-2991, www.thediskords.com

Dispensing Of False Halos – S/T, 7"

This brilliant, mixed tempo screamo 7" from Iowa is such a stunning example of the complexity of new hardcore that I can't picture it written out as sheet music. It's technically far more sophisticated than the opera your rich uncle went to last weekend. Limited to 500 copies, so hurry. (AE)

INIT Records, PO Box 871, Sioux Falls, SD 57101-0871, www.initrecords.com

Distraction, The – Autodestruct, 7"

I wasn't sure what speed to play this at, but the vocals didn't sound that hot on either. The music is mildly entertaining '80s-influenced garage rock that might have won me over had the vocals been less nasal. I liked the track that was almost entirely instrumental. (KM)

Unity Squad Records, PO Box 1235, Huntington Beach, CA 92647, www.unitysquadrecords.com

Diver – The Ophidian Current, CD

If The Fire Theft, the Mars Volta and Diver are any indication, then prog rock is poised for an resurgence. Maybe Yes can take them all on a Monsters of Prog Rock tour! OK, so maybe this sound isn't a hot commodity, but it's not bad in small doses like this. Diver is probably the most palatable of the bands I've mentioned; they're not too weird and meandering to be unlistenable. For the most part, this album is pretty calm and relaxing, with rolling bass lines, soft, intricate guitars and soothing vocals. But then they break it up with metallic chugs and solos, yelled background vocals and skillful drumming. It's like they

Desert Sessions / Dollar Store

couldn't decide whether to sound like Sunny Day Real Estate or In Flames at times. With good tunes like this, I think they should hold off on a decision for now. (NS)

Self-released, www.diverband.com

DJ/rupture – Minesweeper Suite, CD

DJ/rupture has created a must-have album for anyone slightly interested in, say, what Donna Summer's "Big Work" and Cex's "I Am Soundboy" sound like together. Rupture lifts a host of other tracks to create his sound fantasy. Nothing is sacred from hip hop, rap and raga to jungle, reggae and electronica. (EG)

TigerBeat 6, PO Box 460922, San Francisco, CA 94146-0922, www.tigerbeat6.com

Del Cielo – Wish And Wait, CD

Highly enjoyable indie rock from an all-girl three piece that hooks you with the tantalizing melodies and reels you in with the falsetto-like lead vocals. Lyrics that explore heartbreak from the female point of view round out a nice package that's simple and alluring. (BN)

EyeBall Records, PO Box 1653, Peter Stuyvesant Station, New York, NY 10009, www.eyeballrecords.com

DeNunzio – The Three Point Stance, CD

Compared to both Modest Mouse and Built To Spill, DeNunzio's *Three Point Stance* delivers more rock and fewer quirks. The music is very pulled-together with some nice blending of harmonic sounds between the vocals and guitar. I liked the addition of female vocals on "Help But Smile." (AJA)

Self-released, 3109 W. 37th Ave, Denver CO 80271, www.denunzio.net

D.O.A. – War And Peace, CD

D.O.A. has released a 25th anniversary compilation of tracks from 1978 to 2001 on their own Sudden Death Records. You should own a lot of these records: *Something Better Change*, *Hardcore '81*, *War On 45*, to name a few. What makes this a great compilation is that a lot of harder to find soundtrack songs, benefit songs and more are also included. If you want more of the early stuff, it's all rereleased as well. This sampler would be a great place to hear many of the classic tracks along with how good their later stuff into the '90s actually is. Canadian bands have always seemed like the retarded step-brother of U.S. punk—then again we Americans are stupid. There are so many great Canadian bands, both past and present. If you are a younger punk not hip to D.O.A., pick up this compilation and Joey Shithead's book as well. (EA)

Sudden Death Records, Cascades PO Box 43001, Burnaby, BC, V5G 3H0, Canada, www.suddendeath.com

D.O.A. / Thor – Are U Ready, split CD

Two Vancouver legends together on one CD, and each is way past its prime. Give 'em credit for what Seymour Skinner would call "stick-toitiveness," though. (JC)

Scratch Recordings & Distribution, 726 Richards St., Vancouver, BC, V6B 3A4, Canada, www.scratchrecords.com; Sudden Death Records, Cascades PO Box 43001, Burnaby, BC, V5G 3H0, Canada, www.suddendeath.com

Dollar Store – S/T, CD

Fans of country rock in the tradition of Gram Parsons, Steve Earle and early-'70s era Rolling Stones will be floored by this debut. The band's core consists of current Waco Brothers members Deano Schlabowske,

Reviewer Spotlight: Vincent Chung (VC)

Portraits Of Past, S/T. California's Portraits Of Past sounded like a temper tantrum on speed. My friend Tommy and I recently revisited their LP (on Ebullition) to reminisce on days when patches were prominent and our edges were straight. Almost a decade later, it provoked nothing but exclamations of "Oh my fucking God!" and "Holy shit!" toward everything, from the frantic, hyperactive drumming to the harrowing shrieks to that weird noise between the songs. Tommy even admitted that his old band tried desperately to emulate the bass sound on this record. The epic songs of frustrated disgust pull back at the right times to give the listener a brief breather, then come crashing back with another crescendo set on trashing anything in its path, creating a classic record of its genre.

(Rolling my eyes at you) "Yes, people still make good music": Queerwulf / Sharp Knife split 12"; Slumber Party, 3, Wrangler Brutes demo tape; April March, *Triggers*; Cut The Shit, *Harmed And Dangerous* LP.

Alan Doughty and Joe Camarillo, but it's not some thrown together, "shits-and-giggles" side project. They've released an album, devoid of filler, that clings to your soul like gum on the soles of your boots. Deano, who wrote the majority of the songs, sings the pure working-man's blues. His lyrics detail the conditions of the average American's struggle to keep his/her head above water in these days of economic decline, blind nationalism and narrowed freedoms. He's able to be serious about these subjects without coming off as preachy or too fatalistic. "Little Autocrat" ("You're on a roll baby/ It takes its toll baby/ Listen to that little autocrat") is a dead-on indictment of the Bush administration's war on terrorism. And he doesn't forget about, perhaps, the biggest challenge we all face: the quest for love and affection. There's a smokin' cover of Cher's dance-pop hit "Believe" that totally fits the vibe of the album. A must have for any dissatisfied citizen, in need of a little hope. (AJ)

Bloodshot Records, 3039 W. Irving Park Road, Chicago, IL 60618, www.bloodshotrecords.com

Dolorean - Not Exotic, CD

Sensual, stark and often magnificent, Dolorean's latest release is as timeless as Wilco's *Yankee Hotel Foxtrot*. Bringing folk rock, indie rock and an affection for all things acoustic, Dolorean's Alex James sings with conviction, humble self-assuredness and uncanny delivery reminiscent of the late Elliott Smith. *Not Exotic* is an astonishing accomplishment. (BN)

Yep Roc Records, PO Box 4821, Chapel Hill, NC 27515, www.yeproc.com

Doom Buggy - Versus The Beast, CD

This is an offbeat amalgam of hectic, garage-y rock, experimental dance, sugar-sweet pop and energetic punk rock topped off with quirky vocals and a healthy sense of humor. Intrigued yet? Fans of the Dim Mak roster sure will be. (BN)

Noise Maker! Records, PO Box 71208, Shorewood, WI 53211, www.noise-maker.com

Dopamine - The Time It Takes To Let Go, CD

Oh no, not *emo*! I'm sorry to our editor, who told us to avoid trying to be "funny." I'm just trying to amuse myself while listening to this boring, melodic, heart-wrenching music. Here's a quote from the promo flyer: "Dopamine take influence from an eclectic mix of artists: Nirvana, Rage Against The Machine, Dashboard Confessional and Glassjaw to name a few and an appreciation for traditional music geniuses such as Lionel Richie and Stevie Wonder." Any band that cites Lionel Ritchie as a musical genius should be feared. (JJG)

You and Whose Army Records, PO Box 34398, London, NW6 4XT, UK, www.yawarecords.com

Double Dagger - S/T, CD

Po-mo as a motherfucker. At what point does hyper self-consciousness and self-awareness become severe enough to cause the universe to fold in on itself? Hipsterism, Internet message boards and design (even their name is a typographic reference) are just some of the subjects tackled by this deconstructed rock combo in an aware of self and audience and place of self within audience (am I overdoing it enough

yet?) fashion. Songs with titles like "My Dad Has A Theory That the Internet Is The Roman Coliseum Of Our Times" or "Punk Rock Vs. Swiss Modernism" probably wouldn't work as well without the minimalist artcore approach Double Dagger employs. So perhaps it is *you* who writes review, yes? (RR)

Hit-Dat Records, 3233 Sonia Trail, Ellicott City, MD 21043, www.hit-dat.com

Dragnet - We're All Cutthroats, CD

This album is unrelenting, angry, fast, metallic hardcore. I don't listen to this type of music too often, but I can appreciate when it is done well, like it is here. It made me want to go out and vandalize things. (JJG)

Deadalive, PO Box 42583, Philadelphia, PA 19101, www.deadalive.com

Drug Money - Mtn City Junk, CD

Poppy, melodic and produced by experimental rock star engineer Wharton Tiers (yes, that guy), Drug Money is too good to have such a bad name. Drug Money is a mélange of early '90s rock: Vocalist Fisher Meehan sounds like Eric Bachmann (Archers Of Loaf) fronting a Pixies- and Nirvana-infused rock outfit. (JG)

Hybrid Recordings, 1515 Broadway, 36th Floor, New York, NY 10036, www.hybridrecordings.com

Dukes Of Nothing, The - War And Wine, CD

The first word that came to my mind was "Motorhead." The tearsheet mentions them, too. Much like that great band, the Dukes have the same force, sound and energy. The title track showcases their metal sound, but this isn't cock-rock with wanker solos, but a straight-ahead rock 'n' roll sound. (EA)

Tortuga Recordings, PO Box 291430, Los Angeles, CA 90029, www.tortugarecordings.com

Duvall - Volume & Density, CD

As you may know, Josh Caterer started this band when the Smoking Popes disbanded after he was born again. Musically Duvall pretty much picks up where the Smoking Popes left off, but now the lyrical approach is overtly Christian. What I always liked best about the Smoking Popes was the lyrics. Josh wrote mostly love songs, but through clever word-play and sharp turns of phrase he was consistently able to put a fresh and unique spin on a tired old subject. I had been curious to see if he would bring that same talent and creativity to the Christian-themed lyrics in Duvall. Unfortunately, for the most part the lyrics on this debut album are fairly pedestrian and cliché, with much of the same tired symbolism you hear in those late-night commercials for Contemporary Christian music compilations. It's not that I'm bothered by the personal and spiritual subject matter; I don't mind that at all. I was just hoping to hear a unique and compelling take on it from a songwriter whom I've long admired. (JC)

Asian Man Records, PO Box 35585, Monte Sereno, CA 95030, www.asianmanrecords.com

Dwellers, The - Loveless Ash And Gravel, CD

Very sedate music here. Lots of acoustic guitar strumming and vocals that remind me of some of the calmer Wilco songs or maybe I Hate Myself's quiet parts. Some segments get a little loud, but not for too long. Possibly too relaxing for its own good. (DH)

Dust Conductor Records, dustconductor@hotmail.com

Electric Eye - Raise The Sword, 7"

Garage Punk. From Oregon. With funny liner notes. (JG)

Super Secret Records, PO Box 1585, Austin, TX 78767, www.supersecretrecords.com

Electric Turn To Me - Clouds Move So Fast, CDEP

Gloomy keyboard rock from members of Laddio Bolocko. Erratic and driving guitar blasts swirl into darkened keyboard melodies. Noisy, atmospheric goth-tinged rock with poppy structures and haunting vocal bridges. Like Siouxsie meets the Subtonix, but not quite up to par with either. (MG)

No Quarter, PO Box 42584, Philadelphia, PA 19101, www.noquarter.net

Elkins, Patrick - Chew Your Own Neck, CD

Hey, go crazy on your own time. Lo-fi home recordings like the song where the lyrics are a muffin recipe and another with a list of apparently random objects. (RR)

Chew Your Own Records, 207 N. Adams, Ypsilanti, MI 48197, chewyourown@excite.com

Eltro - Past And Present Futurists, CD

I don't know quite what to make of this, but I like it. Spacey keys and drum programming fill out this dancey and sorta mellow five-piece. Some of it reminds me of Beck's more subdued (but nonacoustic) material. Interesting. (DH)

Absolutely Kosher Records, 1412 10th St., Berkeley, CA 94710-1512, www.absolutelykosher.com

End On End - Why Evolve When We Can Go Sideways?, 12"

Awsome. An angry '90s hardcore band with excellent social/political lyrics. The music doesn't rely on any '90s hardcore clichés and sounds surprisingly fresh. However, it's the lyrics that are the real winner. It's awesome to read such thoughtful and sincere lyrics from a hardcore band, encouraging reading and open-mindedness. Thumbs up. (KM)

Substandard, PO Box 310, Berkeley, CA 94701, www.substandard.com; Coldbringer Recordings, PO Box 931174, Los Angeles, CA 900093

Ends, The - Sorry, XOXOXO, CD

After several singles, The Ends give us a full-length that completely rocks out. In the spirit of late '70s punk, The Ends definitely give us a new product they can all their own. Keeping the pace up without forgetting pop sensibility on each track on, this record comes off effortlessly. This isn't a pop-punk record by any means, however. Fans of that genre would probably get a lot out of this kind of street-punk band, though; the crunchy guitars and raspy vocals make for a good time. It's as if DNA samples taken from members of the Clash or Stiff Little Fingers were added to these folks from Austin. Most likely these guys just have good taste in music. Regardless, *Sorry* comes off as a winner from the first track to the last. Be the cool kid on your street, and get this one first. You will not be disappointed by any means. This one is already in my personal rotation. (DM)

Pelado Records, 521 West Wilson, C103, Costa Mesa, CA 92627, www.peladorecords.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Carla Costa (CC)

Yes, *Fragile*. I have a nephew and niece who are 1 and 2 years old, respectively, and when they come over, we inevitably listen to music. I've found they like two things the best: anything with a "hey hey" or "yeah yeah" call-and-response chorus (i.e. Ramones, The Donnas, etc.) and Yes. Having had their precious little ears trained to classical sound by videos with names like *Baby Bach* (for real), Yes seemed like the next logical step in their musical voyage, captained by yours truly. Someday when they say, "Tia Carla, who invented prog rock?" I'll say, "Well, your old friends Yes." *Fragile*, the band's definitive masterpiece, explodes with creative composition as astounding as J.S. Bach's. Ultimately, the strange sci-fi sounds of *Fragile*—experiments in the range of a single melody, clever tricks in timing and tempo, and the synthetic recreation of a symphonic accompaniment—are based, largely, in tradition. But Yes took classical elements into a new realm by adding rock 'n' roll drumming, thick, amazing bass lines, lush vocal harmonies and dense, dreamlike narratives. The band spurred new movements in rock that incorporated not only classical music, but the foundations of jazz that eventually led to the establishment of avant garde, experimental and math rock as defined genres. Most importantly, they are the pioneers of prog rock, a genre named for its belief that fostering new ideas and methods leads to progress of the mind. It also makes toddlers dance like Oompa Loompas, which is just as important.

Set the turntable to 45: Buzzcocks, *I Don't Mind*; The Cars, *Just What I Needed*; The Donnas, *Strutter*; Kiss, *Detroit Rock City*; Cyndi Lauper, *She Bop*; The Make-Up/Slant 6 split 7".

**Entrance – Honey Moon, CD**

Entrance—aka Guy Blakeslee—unpacks another riveting set of slanted, zig-zagged blues music on *Honey Moon*. Spare and steady, Entrance slides through Robert Johnson and Sylvester Weaver covers as well as standards, stamping them all with his own wacky, warbled quirk. His versions are peculiar, pained and playful. Mostly just Blakeslee and his acoustic guitar, these nine songs sound remarkably full and overpoweringly ferocious as the singer allows his wailing and moaning to do the work. On the lone original “Lookout,” Blakeslee sings “You’re walking on the wrong side of the street/ you’re walking on the wrong side of the street” as if aware of his own oddity. This collection shakes and rattles with an old-time crispness and new-time strangeness, an everlasting honey moon. (BF)

Tiger Style Records, 401 Broadway 26th floor, New York, NY 10013, www.tigerstylerrecords.com

Escanna / You’re Smiling Now But We’ll All Turn Into Demons – split, CD

Escanna play powerful and catchy indie rock along the lines of late ’80s Dischord: intricate guitars give way to abandon and great yelled vocals. YSNBWATID are similar, but maybe just a little more rockin’ and upbeat. Faster tempos, more singing and thicker bass, too. High quality rock from both bands. (NS)

Jazzbear/Function Records, 50C Elfort Rd., London, N5 1AZ, UK

Evaluation, The – We Built The Gun That Causes This Unending Fear, CD

Socially conscious, frenetic and sassy punk that’s essentially genreless, but weaves in and around scream, hardcore, rock and dance punk. Many cues are taken from the Blood Brothers and their ilk, but this band has a style and intensity unmatched by most of the similar bands I’ve heard as late. (MG)

Lujo Recordings, PMB P506, 6201 15th Ave. NW, Seattle, WA 98107, www.lujorecords.com

Explosions In The Sky – The Earth Is Not A Cold Dead Place, CDEP

Somewhere between Mogwai and Godspeed You Black Emperor!, Explosions’ shortest track concludes at 8:17. If you’re up for some epic instrumentals—mostly drums and hypnotic guitars—this is it. (EG)

Temporary Residence Records, PO Box 11390, Portland, OR 97211, www.temporaryresidence.com

Failure, The – ...Of Reason, CD

On *...Of Reason*, rock quartet The Failure explodes with a hardcore punk sound that is considerably more melodic and meaningful than simply muscled. But there’s still a manly mania below the double, driving guitars, creating a back-and-forth that is playful and potent. The nasal singing and continual harmonies and back-ups offer a youthful exuberance, as they play for a specific kind of teenage outcast. “I’m the loser, I’m the social reject/ I’m the nerd, the geek/t he freak who lives all alone” goes the densely weighty “Pep Rally.” *...Of Reason* is furious, fearless, passionate and political, all without sounding contrived and obvious. They retain their musical wits throughout, with sharp guitars and tuneful melodies: There’s no kind of failure here. (BF)

Meter PO Box 368, 440-10816 Macleod Trail SE, Calgary, AB, T2J 5N8, Canada, www.meterrecords.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Brian Czarnik (BC)

V/A, Blues Brothers Soundtrack. Since *Punk Planet* is a music magazine is based in Chicago, I decided to review the best Chicago musical ever, *The Blues Brothers*. This movie is a classic: great comedy, stunts, music and explosions. What more could you want? Well, how about a killer soundtrack? Since this issue should come out during black history month, I felt it fitting to review something that helped bring R&B to the mainstream. It also helped to light some fire under the careers of such legends as John Lee Hooker, Aretha Franklin and James Brown. Comedic actors Dan Aykroyd and John Belushi from the ’70s version of *Saturday Night Live* (when it was funny) created these two blues musicians from Chicago. The band they put together were some of the best real-life musicians around the rhythm and blues scene. The soundtrack features the best female soul singer ever, Aretha Franklin, doing “Think.” Also featured are the Blue Brothers doing a couple of R&B cover tunes in “Everybody Needs Somebody To Love” and “Sweet Home Chicago.” Ray Charles sings on this record, and so does the hardest working man in the business, James Brown. This record will turn you on to the blues for sure. Of course, though, I suggest you get the DVD first and see the best movie ever made. What other movie has a car chase that takes place inside a mall and such classic lines as “We got both kinds: country and western.”

Five black artists to check out: Otis Redding, Buddy Miles, Stevie Wonder, Ray Charles, James Brown.

Fall Of Troy, The – S/T, CD

Less chaotic than Blood Brothers, The Fall Of Troy play screamo-type melodic hardcore. Their songs are varied and not grating—successfully avoiding a pitfall of this genre. Considering these guys are barely 20, their self-titled release is musically creative and mature. I remembered lines from “F.C.P.S.I.T.S.G.E.P.G.E.P.G.E.P.” after hearing it once. (AJA)

Lujo Records, 3209 Jennie Drive, Morgan City, LA 70380, www.lujorecords.com

Farces Wanna Mo – If Not Why Not?, CD

Now is on their 13 release, Farces Wanna Mo prove a fat discography doesn’t equal greatness. The album is largely scatter-brained spoken word on random topics backed by what sounds like a Ween ripoff band. The band unabashedly claims it “ain’t your daddy’s rock ‘n’ roll.” Actually, it’s not rock ‘n’ roll at all. (EG)

Self-released, PO Box 1837, 29 P, CA 92277-1250, www.farceswannamo.com

Far From Breaking – The Identity, CD

I am a little confused about what music this Far From Breaking CD has on it. It includes a second 7” and extra bonus track, and there are 12 tracks. All I know is this Texas sXe band knows how to rock some serious HC like *Start Today*-era Gorilla Biscuits. Nothing is worse than good sXe music ruined by the nü-metal a lot of bands insist on including, and thankfully, Far From Breaking avoids that. The CD layout is awesome, with intense two-tone blue photos of the energetic band and audience members. (DI)

Youngblood Records PO Box 236, Ephrata, PA 17522, www.youngblood-records.com; / Third Party Records, 21 Nancy Lane, Amherst, NY 14228, www.thirdxparty.com

Fat Ass – We Have Come For Your Mothers, CD

This album sounds so much like Zeke that I think that’s the only band I can compare them to. It’s not bad, but Zeke did it better. (JG)

Diaphragm Records, PO Box 10388 Columbus, OH 43201, www.diaphragmrecords.com

Feable Weiner– Dear Hot Chick, CD

A good release from Tennessee’s very own Feable Weiner: great harmonic vocals with a pop-punk musical feel and silly lyrics. You’ve heard this style a million times, but c’mon, hear it once more. (BC)

Doghouse Records, PO Box 8946, Toledo, OH 43623, www.doghouserecords.com

Fed Up / Disavow – split, CD

Lame. Third-rate hardcore bands with terrible vocals and generic hardcore riffs. “Positive is for your HIV test, not for hardcore!” Wow, that’s clever. Makes a great-looking coaster, though. (KM)

NGS Records, PO Box 334, Westmont, IL 60559, www.ngsrecords.com

Femurs, The – S/T, CD

Wow! Eons better than most one-man bands, The Femurs is an electric/acoustic pop-punk recording that sounds like a “true” band even though it’s all the studio creation of an enterprising young man named Rob Schaeffer. Energetic and ballsy, these 16 playful songs all kick ass!

A very promising debut. (AE)

Self-released, 317 E. Thomas (S), Seattle, WA 98102, www.cdbaby.com/femurs

Finger, The – Punk’s Dead Let’s Fuck/We Are Fuck You, CD

It’s Ryan Adams and Jesse Malin slumming in a band that sounds like a cross between Black Flag and the Germs. A sincere tribute to their heroes, perhaps, but it lacks the live-in-a-van desperation and American waste outrage. If they really were “fuck you,” they’d use their real names. (JC)

One Little Indian Records, 34 Trinity Crescent, London, SW17 7AE, UK, www.indian.co.uk

Fire Theft, The – S/T, CD

The Fire Theft consists of three musicians, two formerly of Seattle’s Sunny Day Real Estate. This new self-titled album depicts The Fire Theft’s passion for classic adventurous rock like Led Zeppelin, The Who, Supertramp and even The Beach Boys. The album parts water with dark, almost psychedelic, rock that virtually throbs with wiggling guitar riffs and the lead singer’s Robert Plant-ish wail. The lyrics also add to the ’70s feel with questioning ponderings rather than gloomy declarations: “I see the world in revolution/ Within the darkness a solution” from “Chain” and “Don’t burden your life when you can fill it up with joy” from “Sinatra.” A couple of interestingly eclectic instrumental interludes act as inspiring segues into songs as romantically distraught as “Don’t Fear The Reaper.” Yes, desperation rides high here, but so does hope. And that’s just about the best anyone can wish for. (SP)

Rykodisc USA, 30 Irving Place, Third Floor, New York, NY 10003-2303

Fitness, The – Call Me For Together, CD

Total hedonistic, ’80s-esque attitude and sound right down to the synths, drum machines and dueling boy/girl vocals. “Day Job” sums up the 27-minute album: “Look around and all I see is everyone is staring at me/ Could it be my Gucci shoes?/ Could it be my new hairdo?/ Could it be my Prada pants?” (EG)

The Control Group, www.controlgroupco.com

Fixed Idea – Chuco Life XXIV, CD

Mediocre ska outfit Fixed Idea dabbles in traditional skacore and ska-punk, but doesn’t quite cut the mustard in any one. Plus it features an anemic horn section and lackluster vocals. (EG)

Self-released, fixedidea@hotmail.com

Flames, The – Bad Personality / Fucked Up Day, 7”

Nevermind the trite, metal-influenced punk and the bratty nonvocals. What’s worse are The Flames’ seriously lame lyrics and their pride at having injured audience members with their fire-based pyrotechnics, something they flaunt in the sampling of news footage. Pitiful. (CC)

Vinehell, PO Box 36131, San Jose, CA 95158, www.vinehell.com

Fiat Stanley – Here Comes The Dog, CD

These Floridians play some melodic, up-tempo punk anthems with heavy guitar chugga-chugga and doodle-ooodle solos. The singer has a throaty baritone like Bob Mould, which sounds especially great when he’s pissed and straining. (JC)

Ass-Card Records, Annenstr. 5, 44137 Dortmund, Germany, www.asscardrecords.com

FM Knives – Keith Levine / Valentine, 7”

Throwback ’70s-sounding punk. Nothing out of the ordinary, but not bad. (AJ)

Dirtnap Records, PO Box 21249, Seattle, WA 98111, www.dirtnaprecs.com

Forever I Burn - The Tragedy Dialogs, CDEP

Pretty straightforward, midtempo hardcore with an edge. They mix it up every once and awhile, but not to a "Holy Shit!" extent. Their singer's voice is incredible, though: ultra-violent screaming that sounds like it's distorting a cheap microphone. Brutal. (DH)
Self-released, PO Box 458, Kulpsville, PA 19443, www.foreverburn.com

Fortunato / Give Me Danger - split, 12"

I loved the Fortunato EP I reviewed last year, and my feelings haven't changed. They're heavily influenced by mid-'90s Dischord. It's so inspirational to hear such great music. Give Me Danger play a similar style, but with a little more hardcore in the mix. Both bands have six songs, and all of them are worth hearing. (TK)
Devil Dancer Records, 21 Jones Ave., New Brunswick, NJ 08901;
Pony Collision Recordings, 41 Concord Lane, Basking Ridge, NJ 07920, www.geocities.com/ponycollision

Found Dead Hanging - Dulling Occams Razor, CDEP

Technical, mathy and metal as hell. They reminded me a lot of the Dillinger Escape Plan or Discordance Axis with a few screaming guitar breakdowns thrown into the mix. Nothing new, but the fans of the above bands should be pretty impressed. (TK)
Blackmarket Activities, 23 Rand St., Revere MA 02151, www.blackmarketactivities.com

4ft Fingers - From Hero to Zero, CD

Speedy pop-punk in the vein of Strung Out or Fall Out Boy. Not bad, just a bit repetitive. A good place to start for aspiring punk rock youth. (DH)
Golf c/o Plastic Head Records, PO Box 6 Wallingford D.O., 0X10 9FB, UK, www.plastichead.com

Fracas - On Trial, CD

Covering both Dr. Know and Johnny Paycheck on this record, Fracas bring some Southern blues in the vein of Danzig. I like this CD a lot. It takes me back a few years—hit me with the old school. (DI)
Cheetah's Records, PO Box 1442, Berkeley, CA 94704, www.cheetahrecords.com

Frazer, Paula - A Place Where I Know: 4-Track Songs 1992-2002, CD

Frazer's ripe talent excels at alt-country with a dose of boozy despair. What makes her so different from other icons of the same genre is her subtlety—no lung-belted here. Instead, Frazer offers up operatic crooning, simple love songs and dark, moony atmospheres without the poisonous scorn. Tender poetry. (SP)
Birdman Records, PO Box 50777, Los Angeles, CA 90050, www.birdmanrecords.com

Freedom Archives, The - Chile: Promise Of Freedom, CD

Part audio documentary, part reflection, *Chile: Promises Of Freedom* remembers the September 11, 1973, military coup in Chile against Salvador Allende, the democratically elected governor. Just over an hour of reporting, analysis and storytelling, this is an overwhelming, emotional and historical document, capturing a major moment in Chilean history and the United States' suspicious support. (BF)
The Freedom Archives, 522 Valencia St., San Francisco, CA 94110, www.freedomarchives.org

Reviewer Spotlight: Art Ettinger (AE)

Antischism, End of Time Plus One. These songs are still being repackaged again and again, and this classic double 7" on Selfless Records was itself a repackaging of an old single and what were at the time unreleased out-takes. But it's where a lot of us first heard Antischism. They were undeniably one of the greatest anarchist hardcore bands ever. With insane dual male/female vocals, fierce, political lyrics and provocative cover art, they made Crass instantly obsolete. The eight songs on this collection blaze through punk apartments worldwide to this day and for good reason. They predated emo by a few years, but this sound had a major influence on bands such as Antioch Arrow and Heroin. Purists will want to look for this double 7" and the other early Antischism records, but there's also an easy to find collection on Prank, and the band's only true full-length, *Still Life*, is always in print somewhere, too.

Five punk movies that way more people need to see: *Scumrock* (2002); *Pariah* (1998); *The Decline Of Western Civilization Part III* (1998); *The Driller Killer* (1979); *Stoked: The Rise And Fall Of Gator* (2002).

And if these records were movies, they'd be in my VCR a lot: *The Thermals, More Parts Per Million*; *The Wretched Ones, Less Is More*; *V/A, Hysteria 2*; *Against Me!, As The Eternal Cowboy*; *Anti-Flag, The Terror State*.

Freedom Archives, The - The Vinyl Project, 12"

Meant as a tool for DJs, producers and activists, this collection of soundbites features views on oppression, racism and social issues. At times unnerving, they are all thought-provoking. An incredibly valuable tool for anyone interested in using soundbites to help drive home the important points raised on the record. (BN)
The Freedom Archives, 522 Valencia St., San Francisco, CA 94110, www.freedomarchives.org

Frisk, The - Audio Ransom Note, CD

I always dug Blatz, and as disc this started, I thought it had to be Jesse from Blatz (and later, Criminals). It turns out this is mostly the Criminals with some rhythm changes. Being under a rock at the time, I didn't hear their first EP on Adeline, so The Frisk were news to me. This a great, sloppy punk treat that has some of the classic hooks that made the members' former bands popular: Gr'ups, Blatz, AFI, Criminals, Nerve Agents and Loose Change. The Frisk are best when Jesse is leading us through their anthems and stories. As a way to break up the 13 songs, there are four tracks of "demands" from each member. Get it? *Audio Ransom Note* is the title, and they cleverly worked it into the disc. Kudos for knocking me out with a record I didn't expect to make it into my rotation. (EA)
Adeline Records, 5245 College Ave. #318, Oakland, CA 94607, www.adelinerecords.net

Frontside - Your Wings At My Feet, CD

Socially conscious chug-hardcore with I-cut-my-vocal-cords-and-tied-them-together singing. Nothing too great, though I did like the disc's packaging. (AJA)
Self-released, www.killfrontside.net

Furious Billy - 10 Songs, CD

Ten songs of swamp-country rock, this is a pale imitation of a Bob Dylan many years later. I'm not sure who in *Punk Planet* land will like this, but it's for those who enjoy Southern fried sounds played through acoustic guitars and pianos. (EA)
Mungler Winslowe, PO Box 150671, Brooklyn, NY 11215-0671, www.munglerwinslowe.com

Fusel, The - The Fisherman's Wife, CD

Is this full-length from the California underground's new "hype" band good? Yes. Is it life-changing? No. About half of the album's 14 tracks are inspiring enough to provoke repeated listens. At their best, the three-piece play noisy, slightly unstable, punk-rock tunes with a lot of bratty, fucked up attitude. "All Across The World" and "Fire In The Hole" are perfect examples of the band's potential to stretch their genre's walls and create vital, new sounds. But the singer's whiney voice and heavy treble guitar tone start to wear a bit thin, especially on "A Letter From The Ghetto." They don't have quite enough tools in their bag of tricks yet. Give 'em a little more time and a bit more focus, and I bet they'll really deliver the goods. (AJ)
In The Red Records, PO Box 50777, Los Angeles, CA 90050, www.intheredrecords.com

G-Men, The - Rehab's For Quitters, CD

Metal punk with the kind of vocals that aren't pretty, but stand out and get the job down. The title, *Rehab's For Quitters*, provides a glimpse of the depth of their lyrics. I do appreciate the Tubronegro and Restarts covers. Simple production highlights the partyin', in-your-face attitude. (EA)
October 32nd, 521 Queen Street West, Suite 201, Toronto, ON, M5V 2B4, Canada, www.october32.com

Gay, The - You Know The Rules, CD

The Gay certainly live up to their name: poppy and bright with glowing female vocals, a thoroughly enjoyable listening experience. How gay is that? (JG)
Mint Records, PO Box 3613, Vancouver, BC, V6B 3Y6, Canada, www.mintrecs.com

Gay Tasee - Gayest Hits, Volumes One & Two, 2xCD

You've heard of stoner rock? Well, this is stoner pop. Really low-fi, mostly acoustic, twangy tunes. Interesting for a few minutes but gets old really quickly. (AJ)
Hoex Records, www.hoex.com

Give Up The Ghost - We're Down Til We're Underground, CD

I didn't understand the hype surrounding the early releases from American Nightmare (their former name). Maybe they've improved drastically. Maybe I'm finally getting over my hatred of all music that's not Krishna-core. Regardless of past thoughts, this album is not too shabby. It's bigger label hardcore, but it's not too modernized or generic. They're kickboxing on the fine line between progression and tampering. I've been reading too many press sheets? GUTG feature some cool, passionate vocals and singing. The music goes from standard, fast hardcore to more of a hard-rock feel to post-hardcore maturity. Kind of like Black Flag's career in the course of one album. If the last instrumental track is any indication of things to come, their next album might be on the goth/ambient tip. (NS)
Equal Vision, PO Box 14, Hudson, NY 12534, www.equalvision.com

Giving Chase - Nothing Ever Changes, CD

Following in a long punk rock tradition at Penn State, Giving Chase offers up more HC than Junction, Donora or Samuel, but *Nothing Ever Changes* has a lot of interesting dimensions. The drums are pounding, and the guitars and vocals vary from quiet or loud. (DI)
Jump Start Records, PO Box 10296, State College, PA 16805, www.jumpstartrecords.com

Gone Overseas, The - Where Do You Want to Go, My Heart?, CD

Unabashedly emo, this Swiss/Italian outfit pulls off said genre extremely well. OK, there's more: They're all kind of cute guys in a Euro-chic/metrosexual kind of way. Yes, faux-hawks and all. (EG)
Matchpoint Records, Via Busabai 29, 6622 Ronco s/Ascona, Switzerland, www.mystupiddream.com/matchpoint

Goner - How Good We Had It, CD

This is what Ben Folds would sound like if he a Southern accent, played a Moog and watched the VHI countdown. Poppy, Moog-driven rock with indie-rock leanings. The vocalist sounds familiar, but I can't think of who he sounds like. Something about this record is very Matchbox 20-ish. It's scary. (KM)
Bifocal Media, PO Box 50106, Raleigh, NC 27650-0106, www.bifocalmedia.com

**Good For You – Neurotic Showering Habits, CD**

Blistering irreverence bolts out of the guitar-rock second release from Oakland's Good For You. But attitude cannot save the crunch, jolt and drone of an indie sound that sacrifices care and craft for college-rock conception. Standouts "5 Bucks" and "Standing By" jam slick, danceable riffs into the mix, teasing at the band's potential. (BF)
Good Forks Records, 5499 Claremont Ave. Suite 8, Oakland, CA 94618, www.goodforks.com

Good Vs. Evil – Fry Day The 13th, CD

The NOFX comparisons are inescapable: pop-punk tunes about work, getting fucked up, girls and so on. I bet it's a ton of fun to be in this band. The liner notes say how this record was totally independent, so good for them! (DH)
Self-released, www.goodvsevil.com

Grand Unified Theory – S/T, CD

Young twentysomethings usually give it to you fairly straight. Jerry Chen has written a record full of heartfelt nuggets that he recorded in his Berkeley apartment. The only thing you don't get is a visual picture of Chen, but you sure know his thoughts. His soft parade of keys and still-hot feelings hide nothing. (SM)
Undetected Plagiarism Records, 2750 Dign Way, #2, Berkeley, CA 94704, www.undetectedplagiarism.com

Graves Brothers Deluxe, The – Filter Feeders, CDEP

The Graves Brothers Deluxe shift from the drone and crackle of experiments with homemade instruments into guttural, screeching punk into a smooth, jazzy cover of Jose Jimenez's "Munequita Negra" without a hitch. Not to mention their remarkably good cover of Pere Ubu's "Heart of Darkness." (CC)
Good Forks, 5499 Claremont Ave. Suite 8, Oakland, CA 94618, www.goodforks.com

Grounded – All Too Human, CD

These guys play Warped Tour-style punk infused with socio-political lyrics condemning the rich elitist plutocracy. However, they've recently signed onto the largely corporate sponsored Nokia 5100 Core Tour. Huh? I don't get it either. (AJA)
Surprise Truck Entertainment, PO Box 4077, Hollywood CA 90078-4077, www.surprisetruck.com

Guardia Negra – ¡Adrenalina!, CD

Sung entirely in Spanish with English translations provided in the accompanying booklet, these anarcho-punks sing politically inspired songs dealing with oppression, racism and the many injustices that burden this world. Think Oi Polloi and Strike Anywhere with thick, tough vocals, upbeat melodies and group-sung choruses. (BN)
Fires and Flames, www.firesandflames.com

Halo Perfecto – Hospitals In Other Countries, 12"

In the truest sense of the word, these Rhode Islanders are simply art. The three members list their roles in the band as The Sauce, Glue and Interference. I quickly got a sense that, with everything they do, meaning is up for grabs. By visiting every genre of guitar rock imaginable, Halo Perfecto evades comparison and sings everything in rid-

dles. The only lyrics of "Dance Music," one of the best songs on the record, state: "All music is dance music/ all music is noise." If that's so, these guys make noise sound all right, even if they give it no goddamn sense at all. (SM)

Under Radar, PO Box 28226, Providence, RI 02908, www.underadar.com

Hansen, Anne – Direct Action: Reflections Of Armed Resistance And The Squamish Five, CD

Urban militant and member of the Squamish Five, Anne Hansen discusses the guiding principles and tactics of Direct Action. Specifically explaining the difference between direct action and terrorism, she focuses on dismantling economic enterprise and property rather than attacking individuals. She also relates her story of taking part in the Litton and Red Hot Video bombings, her trial and subsequent imprisonment for seven years. Hansen's spoken word is a wonderfully debatable account of the role and/or necessity of violence in effective activism. It is a lecture that is undeniably relevant in a world where environmental havoc, cold-hearted corporate policies, discrimination and hate increasingly worsen. (AJA)
G7 Welcoming Committee Records, PO Box 27006, 360 Main Street Concourse, Winnipeg, MB R3C 4T3 Canada, www.g7welcomingcommittee.com

Harmful – Sanguine, CD

This album sucks in a way a lot of bad German bands do: It sounds too mechanical (like Kraftwerk) and exacting to have any real passion. This band can play well, but it is too soulless to leave an impact. (JJG)
Steamhammer/spv gmbh, PO Box 721147, 30531 Hannover, Germany, www.spvusa.com

Hawtnay Troof – Get Up Resolution: Love, CD

More electro bloopy-bloppy sassy stuff, in the vein of Fannypack or Gravy Train!!!! I'm over it. (JG)
Retard Disco, PO Box 461163, Los Angeles, CA 90046, www.retarddisco.com

Heartaches, The / Agitators, The – split, 7"

The Heartaches sound like the Sex Pistols. So do the Agitators. Strong offerings from both bands and well-recorded, too. (JG)
No contact information provided

Hero Pattern – Cut You Out, CD

Yet another indie-rock album that follows the familiar formula without attempting to deliver something new. There's a lot of talent here being wasted recording the same songs you've heard countless times. That said, this is a good rock record if you don't mind repetitiveness. (BN)
Self-released, PO Box 180106, Boston, MA 02118, www.heropattern.com

Heros Severum – Rock N Roll Nigger / Get Ur Freak On, 7"

The B-side includes a wonderful version of Missy Elliott's "Get Ur Freak On," but my problem lies with the A-side cover of Patti Smith's "Rock N Roll Nigger," by this Athens GA trio. What could go wrong with these three things: Patti Smith, Missy Elliott and Athens, Ga., home of some of indie rock's greatest bands? Patti Smith is a wonderful singer; *Heros* began a wonderful career, and she is still rocking well past 50. Something happened during the late '70s when she wrote this song, though. It was totally uncool then and even more so now. I can't imag-

ine why a band would want to play it, let alone record it. What exactly is so bad with the lyrics? "Jimi Hendrix was a nigger." To be fair, she calls Jackson Pollock one too. Even in art, some words shouldn't be spoken. This might get me in trouble, but it's just my opinion. (DI)
Two Sheds Records, PO Box 5455, Atlanta, GA 31107-5455, www.twoshedsmusic.com

Hewhocorrupts – Ten Steps To Success, CD

Vicious grindcore/power violence type that sounds like a machine gun mentally abusing you: breakneck speeds and hideous vocals with only a few moments to catch your breath. It seems like the lyrics were written in the course of a minute, but there isn't time to worry. Just stop, drop and roll. (NS)
Sinister Label, PO Box 1178, LaGrange Park, IL 60526, www.sinisterlabel.com

HorrorPops – Hell Yeah, CD

This really took me by surprise. The record starts off like Siouxsie Sioux fronting an amped-up Bow Wow Wow, with touches of glam and a slight hint of ska for good measure. Midway through, it turns into the Cramps playing Revillos songs. Then it's back to Siouxsie, but now she's singing in a surf band. The HorrorPops are some daring Danes who aren't afraid to cross over into numerous different genres, and somehow the whole album manages to sound cohesive and natural. The songs are catchy and fun, and the singer is absolutely fantastic. I like this a lot, especially the new wavier songs. (JC)
Hellcat Records, 2798 Sunset Blvd., Los Angeles, CA 90026, www.hell-cat.com

Horse The Band – R. Borlax, CD

Mix of fast, metalcore type riffs and '80s avant-garde synthesizer music. They call it "Nintendocore." I don't like video games, and I don't like this. Tomahawk fans might dig it, though. (AJ)
Revelation Records, PO Box 5232, Huntington Beach, CA 92615, www.revelationrecords.com

Houston, Penelope – Snapshot, CDEP

Former '70s punk songstress (The Avengers) polishes up obscure cover songs by groups including The Band and Pentangle. This short five-song disc showcases Houston's talent for veering toward the poppy side of life. Greatest track: the '60s-ish "It Makes No Difference"—sad but sweet enough for some lazy swinging. (SP)
Flare Records, PO Box 423748, San Francisco, CA 94142, www.flarerecord.com

Hypatia – We Move At The Speed Of Light, 7"

Featuring ex-members of Gatecrashers, Robot Attack and more, this is great straight-up punk rock with influences all over the map. The drums are king here. Support a small band and label and pick up this single. Punk fans should dig the slow and fast parts that keep this record from becoming typical. (EA)
Square of Opposition Records, 2935 Fairview St., Bethlehem, PA 18020, <http://sofo.fakeindependent.com/>

Hypatia / Robot Attack – split, 7"

Both bands sound exactly the same with redundant hardcore, except Robot Attack has some boring instrumentals thrown into the mix. Lyrically Hypatia is concerned with the dangers of hormone- and additive-induced food and "the Man's" efforts to destroy youth culture with

Reviewer Spotlight: Benjamin Friedland (BF)

XTC, Black Sea. At its best, pop music is skewed, frayed, purposeful, smart and catchy. In the late '70s and throughout the '80s, British rockers XTC were all these and more. On their 1980 classic, *Drums And Wire*, the quartet teamed with producer Steve Lillywhite to twist and subvert 14 first-rate pop tunes. Somewhere between The Clash and Talking Heads lies XTC, whose synthesizers and drum programs shake and rattle along with heavy-hitting bass lines and plucky guitar chops. But it's the circus-y, harmonized and anthemic singing coupled with the deliberate, head-spinning structures that make this band and this album such cult favorites. The songwriting pair of guitarist/vocalist Andy Partridge and bassist/vocalist Colin Moulding tear through politically charged songs about England and sex and everything in between. On the show-stopping, head-bopping opener "Respectable Street," Partridge sings over background ooh-oohs: "Now they talk about abortions/ in cosmopolitan proportions to their daughters/ they speak of contraception/ and immaculate receptions on their portable/ Sony entertainment centers." A band that never knew popular acclaim, XTC played with a timeless vigor, demonstrating a foresight that far too often results only in critical acclaim. *Black Sea* is a pop whirlwind, full of hooks, quirks, jerks and smirks—a treasured piece of music's past to be dug up and dusted off.

What else is spinning: Okkervil River, *Down the River of Golden Dreams*; Crooked Fingers, *Red Devil Dawn*; Palacé Songs, *Hope*; Fiery Furnaces, *Gallowsbird's Bark*; Leona Naess, *S/T*.

I Would Set Myself on Fire for You / Kid 606

alcohol and drugs. However, they're all for home brewin'. I guess their heart's in the right place. Robot Attack is less preoccupied with environmental ills and more into skateboarding, "skipping class and spewing gas" (exhaust that is). Overall, the split's really lame and really bad. If you really hate someone's guts, get them this record, even though they'll probably never listen to it. (AJA)

Square of Opposition Records, 2935 Fairview St., Bethlehem, PA 18020, <http://solo.fakeindependent.com>

I Would Set Myself On Fire For You – S/T, CDEP

Despite their stupid name, these guys are really great. They incorporate a viola and male/female vocals into their well-layered screamo songs. I really enjoyed this. There is a lot of feeling behind the songs that the viola brings out well. The cardboard packaging is screen printed in a few colors, and the booklet is equally impressive and artistic. I would really like to see them live. You can go to their website and download a clip of their set, and it doesn't look like they use microphones. There is just a lot of screaming and clapping going on. (TK)

Stickfigure Records, PO Box 55482, Atlanta GA 30308, www.stickfigurerecords.com

If Hope Dies – The Ground Is Rushing Up To Meet Us, CD

Melodic metalcore with breakdowns, etc. I'd rather just listen to Uinearth. (DH)

Ironclad Recordings, PO Box 1757, Wakefield, MA 01880, www.ironcladrecordings.com

Incredible Moses Leroy, The – Become The Soft.Lights, CD

Led by singer/songwriter/multi-instrumentalist Ron Fountenberry, The Incredible Moses Leroy play dreamy pop tunes layered over drum 'n' bass grooves and break-beats. Interesting arrangements and some well-executed ideas. Really laid back, pretty stuff. (AJ)

Ultimatum Music, 8723 W. Washington Blvd., Culver City, CA 90232, www.ultimatummusic.com

Integrity – To Die For, CDEP

Metal band with an old-school, late '80s thrash sound. It's not quite on the level of the masters (Nuclear Assault, Sepultura, etc.), but there are some solid riffs sprinkled throughout the EP. At just over 20 minutes, it's short and sweet, too. Rock on. (AJ)

Deathwish Inc, 35 Congress St., Salem, MA 01970, www.deathwishinc.com

Intelligista – Bang! Bang!, 7"

Here's a nicely laid out 7" by this retro four-piece unit on Unity Records. Their sound is a little more '60s psychedelic garage, like the Pandoras. These guys must have grown up listening to the Rodney on the Roq radio show. Nothing sounds fresher than the bass-and-organ combo. (DI)

Unity Squad Records, PO Box 1235, Huntington Beach, CA 92647, www.unitysquadrecords.com

Ivory Springer – Thirty Two Points On A Compass, CDEP

A bit Shudder to Think and generally in the vein of early '90s Dischord, Ivory Springer has released a solid, if short (seven songs) release. (JG)

Purr Records, 14 George St., Bath, BA1 2EN, UK, www.purr.org.uk

A Jealousy Issue – If The Flames Don't Kill Us We Will, CD

Great title, boring record—another metal/hardcore hybrid, fresh off the assembly line. Generic breakdowns and riffs right where you'd

expect them to be. I'm hoping that all of these bands with potential follow up their boring records with amazing ones so I can have more to air guitar along with. (DH)

Indianola Records, www.indianolarecords.com

Jenkins, Tim – Songs Of Encouragement, CD

When the Postal Service blew me away earlier this year with *Give Up*, it was because Ben Gibbard's acoustic weepings transferred easily to Jimmy Tamborello's electronica. With Jenkins, the songs are within his chops. Where he could stand improvement is realizing where the effects don't belong. (SM)

Spare Chant Records, 3300 Main St., #203, Dallas, TX 75226, www.sparechantrecords.com

Jet By Day / Maginot Line – split, 7"

Jet By Day plays a unique blend of melodic, hooky hardcore and traditional rock sounds. The Maginot Line track shines—a great indie-core tune with a lot of variation. One song from each band. (MG)

Two Sheds Music, PO Box 5455, Atlanta, GA 31107-0455, www.twoshedsmusic.com

Joan Of Arc / Rabbit Rabbit – split, 7"

Joan Of Arc's bizarre "Please Don't Mistake My Arrogance For Shyness," with its witty interplay of jaunty piano and guitar, is the perfect ballad. But so is Rabbit Rabbit's "Blackbird Kills It," a ballad with a chain-saw heart carefully balanced with Kim Ambriz's soothing vocals. (CC)

Record Label, 2438 N. Maplewood, Chicago, IL 60647, recordlabel3000@yahoo.com

Joust – What's Good Is Happening, CD

Joust play that style of upbeat rock/pop that sounds like borderline alternative/indie rock to me. They've got the keyboards, lyrics longing for ladies, the Weezer influence and sweet boy vocal harmonies. There's nothing particularly wrong with this release; it's just not too memorable. (KM)

Angryson Records, 47 Douglas Ave., Mansfield, OH 44906, www.anygrysonrecords.com

K-Line – How You Gonna Scare Us Now?, CD

This arrived in my review box about an hour after I was lying in bed, listening to the Stupids and wondering when I was going to get my lazy ass to order it. Luckily fate intervened, or I'd probably still be in bed. K-Line carries on the heritage of two of my favorite musical regions: D.C. and England. They combine the evolution of early Dischord with the tunefulness of great English punk. This album shows that hardcore doesn't have to be screamed or fast as can be. It can be melodic without losing its power. Here on their first full-length, K-Line builds on the strengths of their earlier EPs and takes the post-hardcore reigns with authority. The songs seem to alternate between raw, emotional outbursts and highly crafted works of melody. A band like ATDI might be a more current reference point, but K-Line has actual ties to the D.C. scene of the '80s. If you need proof, check out "Full Attention," which was co-written by Michael Hampton (SOA, Faith, Embrace, One Last Wish guitarist). Regardless, this album stands on its own as a reminder of what once was and what can still be achieved. Their cover of the Cure's "A Forest" doesn't hurt either. (NS)

Boss Tuneage, PO Box 74, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19 2WB, UK, www.bosstuneage.com; Does Everyone Stare, PO Box 35004, Edmonton AB, T5K 2R8, Canada, www.doeseveryonestare.com

Keelhaul – Subject To Change Without Notice, CD

An album of intense, heavy and largely instrumental metal-math rock that might attract those who are primarily impressed by a band's technical musicianship. However, in the way of inciting any visceral reaction, it isn't successful. The songs are too long and heavy and take some patience to listen to. (AJA)

Hydra Head Records, PO Box 291430, Los Angeles CA 90029, www.hydrahead.com

Kevin K & The Real Kool Kats – Kiss Of Death, CD

This New York export now resides in France where he plays his '70s-sounding music. Even though some of their songs sound all right, most are tired and have awful lyrics. But Europe loves him! Power to you, Kevin K., for finding your place in rock. (DM)

Lollipop Records, 7 Impasse Montsegur, 13016 Marseille, France, www.chez.com/lollipoprecords

Kid Dynamite – Cheap Shots, Youth Anthems, CD

Words cannot describe the impact Kid Dynamite had on the hardcore scene during their all too short existence. But their music *can*, and so we have here a new collection that brings together every split and compilation track as well as their original demo and a live radio appearance. Understandably, given the wide range of sources used to put together this collection, the sound quality varies dramatically. What really matters, however, is the fact that the energy and passion are evident the entire disc. Driven by the raw guitars and brisk melodies, the songs explode with intense riffs and hoarse vocals. It's especially interesting to hear KD's original demo and experience the band at their angriest. The live radio show recordings include some witty chitchat as well as spirited live performances that were the band's last. As if that wasn't enough, there is a bonus DVD included that contains live footage, photos and flyers that have never been seen until now. *Cheap Shots, Youth Anthems* is a must-buy for any self-respecting hardcore enthusiast and music fanatic. (BN)

Jade Tree Records, 3210 Kennwynn Road, Wilmington, DE 19810, www.jadetreec.com

Kid 606 – Kill Sound Before Sound Kills You, CD

More driving, raucous and brilliant than any noise band you could ever think of, Kid 606 wields samplers, synthesizers and turntables with skills of superhero caliber. He flies, shoots, stabs, darts and drops his wrath. It's driven at hyper-speed without missing a detail. Occasionally he stops for a breather on tracks like "Andy Warhol Is Dead But We Still Have Hope," with its trickle of strings and acoustic guitar that are splice/splice/spliced into a symphony, but that goes straight into the tweet and squeak of video game sound effects and the pouncing, jungle rhythm of "Ecstasy Motherfucker." On *Kill Sound Before Sound Kills You*, his fifth full-length, Kid 606 (a.k.a. Miguel Depedro) attempts to do just that. The tripping tempo of jungle crashes with weaving bass lines, and samples talk back to the techno hits. What makes our fearless superhero of sound so amazing is how each of his records has voy-

Reviewer Spotlight: Erica Gallagher (EG)

Le Tigre, S/T. I never encountered a Kathleen Hanna joint I didn't like, from Bikini Kill to Julie Ruin and now *Le Tigre* (and the half-dozen lesser-known projects in between). *Le Tigre*, the self-proclaimed feminist punk electronic outfit, exhibits the apex of this genre. The vibe of *Le Tigre*'s 1999 self-titled album varies from chillin' to body movin'. Although the fly samplers and beat makers are *Le Tigre*'s sonic trademark, the trio's lyrical objective is to create a safe space to unite, revolt and fucking dance already. Hence the album kicks off with "Hot Topic," a big up to the band's feminist cohorts and predecessors with generous shout-outs to great musicians, athletes, writers and artists. To switch it up a bit, "Eau D' Bedroom Dancing" is an unpretentious, introspective look into an individual's journey toward self-acceptance. The blistering "Let's Run" says it's better to try and fail than never try at all. One cut that really tugs on my heartstrings is "Les And Ray." It's a "thank you" song for those things—music, people, whatever—that give us the power to keep going when things start to suck. In addition to the remarkably enriching qualities of *Le Tigre*'s albums and live shows (in all of their a/v glory), the group recently put up a new website (www.letigreworld.com), which lavishly indulges fans with tons of first-person greetings and irresistible eye-candy.

Kick out the Jams: A Radio With Guts, *Beat Heart Sweet Stereo*, Ben Davis, *Aided & Abetted*, The Meters, *Anthology*, Radio 4, *Gotham*.



aged into the unknown, but he always comes out victorious. That's mostly because his missions and music are guided by intense emotion. This record may be his most successful adventure yet. (CC)
Ipecac Recordings, PO Box 1197, Alameda, CA 94501, www.ipecac.com

Killer Dreamer – Survival Guns / Pterodactyl2, 7"

Can a band have Tourette's Syndrome? Killer Dreamer might. One second they spew fractured, catchy-as-hell, trashy punk, the next they're slashing out metal leads or stadium rock breakdowns. Several former Jag-Offs play the trashed out punk you expected from that band, but they've been listening to more Cheap Trick. (RR)
Kapow Records, PO Box 286, Fullerton, CA 92836, www.kapowrecords.com

King Prawn – Got The Thirst, CD

Catchy, upbeat ska-punk bursting at the seams with infectious melodies and numerous outside influences. Reminiscent of the early Red Hot Chili Peppers at times and of Sugar Fly at others, this UK import has the range to conquer the local mainstream market. (BN)
GOLF/Plastic Head Records, PO Box 6, Wallingford D.O. OX10 9FB, UK, www.plastichead.com

Kingsbury Manx, The – Aztec Discipline, CD

Low key, unobtrusive indie pop, kinda like their Chicago peers The Sea And Cake. Because nothing really sticks out, it makes good background music, but it also drags after awhile. The vocals often stay in the upper registers, which gives the band a poppier sound, but it gets old. (KR)
Overcoat Recordings, 3831 N. Christiana, Chicago IL 60618, www.overcoatrecordings.com

Klein, Jeff – Everybody Loves A Winner, CD

Smokey and whispery, Jeff Klein's *Everybody Loves A Winner* is slow-building, torchlight music. Mostly acoustic guitars set over brushed drums, these 10 songs strip down to seduce: honest, bare and personal. Klein has a knack for the tortured but accessible lyric, as he navigates love, loneliness and whatever's left. On the haunting "Steady Wins," the songwriter dusts off his alarming but intriguing rougher side and sings "Do I have to take you outside/ and show you what a real man is/ you've been acting like a child/ so put up a fight." But the album's highlight is the slightly cranked up "California," where Klein's rasp couples with a looming cello and a female harmony vocal to capture all the richness and textures lurking within his songs. Relax, Jeff, we certainly love you. (BF)
One Little Indian Records, 34 Trinity Crescent, London, SW17 7AE, UK, www.indian.co.uk

Knuckledust – Universal Struggle, CD

You can't argue with lyrics like "Fucking Scumbag, fucking leech/ I'd love to smash every one of your teeth." This is better than most tough-guy hardcore because the lyrics are pretty funny. I doubt that the humor was intentional. (TK)
GSR, Ecrevissestraat 41, 6125 AW Obbicht, The Netherlands, www.gsrmusic.com

La Motta – Love California, CD

The vocals are average at best, but you have some great guitar riffs and enough rock 'n' roll energy to fill a Big Gulp. These five songs will leave you wanting to hear more, which is a good thing. It reminded me of the Ace Frehley 's(Kiss) solo record for some odd reason. (BC)
Boss Tuneage PO Box 74, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19 2WB UK, www.bosstuneage.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Melissa Geils (MG)

Television, Marquee Moon. One of the greatest records of all time, and it hasn't been spotlighted yet? Amazing. This is a must-have for any current or former punk rocker, let alone any music lover. Television was one of CBGB's classic regulars during the glory days (late 1970s) of New York City. But unlike the straighter punk bands of the time (Ramones, Blondie, etc.), Television brought about an entire new sound that completely challenged and changed the punk aesthetic. In a scene where songs stuck to three chords and two minutes, they brought in the idea of the punk guitar "jam," extending songs to 13 minutes long (like the classic epic of this record, "Marquee Moon"). Guitar players Verlaine and Richard Lloyd mastered the jangly guitar interplay that would later influence post-punk and art-punk bands, and Verlaine's soaring-yet-strained/paranoid vocals took away from the "punk as loud and screaming" status quo. If that's not enough for you, you could follow the music history chain-of-command: If Television never happened, then Richard Hell would've never started the Voidoids (Hell was the original bassist of Television, as well as a childhood friend of Verlaine), and, thusly, Malcolm McLaren would have never stolen Hell's style and given it to a young Sid Vicious or Johnny Rotten before the Sex Pistols ever meant a damn thing. How about that for punk rock?

Best live acts I was lucky enough to see in 2003: Rocket From The Tombs, Lungfish, Black Eyes, James Chance & The Fibbs, Mah Jonng, Tyrades, A Frames, TV On The Radio, Nick Cave and Turn Pale.

Last Collapse – The Fallen, CDEP

Last Collapse play fast glam metal with a bit of a southern California melodic hardcore influence thrown in to keep up with the times. Unlike most metal bands, Last Collapse writes lyrics that are intelligent and political. If Bad Religion went metal, they'd sound something like Last Collapse. (AE)
Embers Records, 909 East Yorba Linda Blvd., Suite H-164, Placentia, CA 92870, www.embersrecords.com

Lazy American Workers – Surf Lake Erie, CD

Three boys play fast-as-hell hardcore punk with goofy lyrics about arcade games and how much fun it is to shoot a gun. Nothing too special, but they do a pretty good cover of Iron Maiden's "The Trooper." (KM)
Sin Klub Entertainment, PO Box 2507, Toledo, OH 43606, www.sinklub.com

Lazy Cowgirls, The – I'm Goin' Out And Get Hurt Tonight, CD

The Lazy Cowgirls are lifers. They're not playing rock 'n' roll because it's fashionable or because it pays well. They're playing rock 'n' roll because they have to. Not so much blazing trails as carrying the torch, they're whoopin' ass on dudes half their age while they're at it. (JC)
Reservation Records, 7101 SE Reed College Place, Portland, OR 97202, www.rezrecs.com

Lebatol – Four By Ninety Four, CD

These Londoners play a noisy brand of melodic hardcore meets indie rock. Similar to Hot Water Music and Fugazi, but not good. These are some of the most god-awful vocals I have ever heard. There are some nice meandering instrumentals, but once the vox kick in, my ears bleed. (MG)
Function Records, 50c Elfort Road, London N5 1AZ, UK, www.functionrecords.com

Les Baton Rouge – My Body The Pistol, CD

Les Baton Rouge have sent a gem of a disc from Portugal through Germany and, finally, the United States. Veteran musicians of the Portuguese music scene formed Baton Rouge and have created a great mix of the '90s riot grrl, '80s new wave and '70s punk rock. *My Body The Pistol* is a breath of fresh air, mixing sounds of several generations without sounding like a complete mess. Suspira Franklyn, who sings and plays guitar, has a presence of a Kathleen Hanna in her low growls and high screeches. The production is loud and abrasive thanks to the expert knob-turning of Tim Kerr (ex-Big Boys, etc.) Their debut LP and single both were road maps of where Les Baton Rouge were headed. Through maturing and the help of Mr. Kerr, this sophomore effort reaches a peak and should find its way in your collection. (EA)
Elevator Music, PO Box 628, Bronxville, NY 10708, www.elevatormusic.com

Liarbird – Superba Menura, CD

With an all-star line-up featuring members of Tiger Trap, The Raincoats (!) and Dub Narcotic Sound System, Liarbird's superior roster is matched only by the high quality of its musical output. Twangy and laid-back, the 11 tracks on *Superba Menura* are a fabulous soundtrack to an evening spent by the fire. (JG)
Chainsaw Records, 416 Eighth Ave. SE, Olympia, WA 98501, www.chainsaw.com

Killer Dreamer / the Little Killers

Life At Sea – Is There A Signal Coming Through? CD

Life At Sea delivers "big-sounding" indie rock, or, as they call it, "edgy pop." I like the cover art of this album, and it parallels the music. Like the art, the music is multilayered, comfortable and both delicate and rough around the edges. I definitely want to keep listening to this. (AJA)
Lucid Records, 665 Timber Hill Road, Deerfield, IL 60015, www.lucidrecords.com

Life In Bed – Two Point Perspective, CD

Life In Bed plays melodic rock songs infused with pop and vocals reminiscent of former showmates Hey Mercedes. "The Ground Below" definitely stood out with its atmospheric synth components and the brooding vocals barely audible over the music. (AJA)
Self-released, PO Box 42284, Pittsburgh PA 15203, www.lifeinbed.net

Life In Pictures – Songs From The Sawmill, CD

Metallic hardcore done right. This band has the chugs and the screams, but they also have an excellent style of instrumentation that separates them from most bands doing the same thing. Impressive metal-techy guitar work, pounding drums and blastbeats abound, with awesome mosh breakdowns and not one second of sloppiness. (MG)
Limekiln Records, PO Box 4064, Philadelphia, PA 19118, www.limekilnrecords.com

A Life Once Lost – A Great Artist, CD

Who gave Meshuggah American work permits? Rhythmic, intense and precise hardcore from these angry bastards. Tons of huge riffs and weird time signatures round out a great record. Although I wish that they'd speed it up every once and a while, this is definitely on point for those smoked-out evenings. (DH)
Deathwish inc, 35 Congress St., Salem, MA 01970, www.deathwishinc.com

Lines Of Sight – S/T, CD

Here are four math-rock songs by four East Coast punks playing in San Francisco. Recorded by Bret from the Pre-teens, it's a comforting recording for moments of deep thoughts or quiet yoga in a busy and stressful world. (DI)
Chuckbeat Records, www.chuckbeat.com

Link – The Kids Are Alright, CD

Energetic pop punk complete with cutesy sneer from Tokyo-U.S. implants, produced with a little help from Billie Joe. Catchy songs and thoughtfully written lyrics make it a reliable purchase for fans of this genre. (AJA)
Adeline Records, 5245 College Ave #318, Oakland, CA 94618, www.adelinerecords.net

Little Killers, The – S/T, CD

Here's a terrific example of a band that doesn't have to reinvent the wheel in order to be effective. This three-piece cranks out fast, gritty rock 'n' roll with a hint of bluesy swagger. They've studied their Cramps and Johnny Thunders and definitely learned their lessons well. Total party album. (AJ)
Crypt Records, 221 South Third St., Apt. 2F, Brooklyn, NY 11211, www.cryptrecords.com

Living Science Foundation – Last Call For Nightfall, CD

The best tunes on this release are the instrumentals because you don't have to listen to the singer's lame, out of tune, Perry Farrell rip-off. The music's not bad—kind of a trippy, dub-reggae-influenced acid rock. If they ditch the singer, they might have a chance. (AJ)

Second Nature Recordings, PO Box 413084, Kansas City, MO 64141, www.secondnaturerecordings.com

Loch Ness Johnny – Devil's Dance, CD

Bar band with a heavy bluegrass/folk influence. A bit too straight-laced and not enough strong tunes to really satisfy. (AJ)

Self-released, www.lochnessjohnny.com

Loose – Rock The Fuck On! – CD

This Italian band plays total cock-rock-n-roll with Detroit '70s punk feel. The two covers of The Stooges and the MC5 are in here to prove it. Rock 'n' roll fans will easily enjoy this disc. They're definitely not treading new ground, but that isn't always a bad thing. (EA)

Self-released, 62029 Tolentino (MC), Italy, www.loose-rock.com

Love Me Destroyer – Black Heart Affair, CD

Former members of Denver's Pinhead Circus get together to make some aggressive, more focused melodic punk. The self-loathing lyrics talk of all things tough—knives, scars and whiskey. Their cover art features staged murder scenes, and though it's been done, I'm a sucker for fake blood. (AJA)

Suburban Home Records, PO Box 40757, Denver CO 80204, www.suburbanhomerecords.com

Lovedrug – The Rockroll EP, CDEP

Lovedrug plays slick, poppy-rock songs that don't have much rock 'n' roll attitude, despite the EP's title. The songs are well-written and accessible, but this to me is like a glossy magazine—fun for awhile but makes no lasting impression. (AJA)

Self-released, www.emoartists.com

Lungfish – Love Is Love, CD

Dischord's longest-running band returns with a new batch of lullabies for pirates' children. Their 10th album is somber, repetitive, atmospheric and poetic. (JC)

Dischord Records, 3819 Beecher St. NW, Washington, DC 20007, www.dischord.com

Lying In States – Most Every Night, CD

Guitar-driven indie rock—it's not often that bands holding this unfortunate tag can pull a good review out of me, due to the usual lack of originality and/or just plain boringness. But Lying In States are in a different bag. Actually, they're in a different universe, one of bands that play supremely crafted, expansive and powerful, guitar-driven indie rock. Atonal sounds; slow, gut-wrenching build-ups and crescendos; lovely piano/keyboard melodies; absolutely impressive guitar interplay and pounding rhythms. They all create a tension that easily sucks the listener in and around each song. And thankfully, this band knows a thing or two about variation, because each of the 11 songs on this record stands out, whether it's a classic-rock-styled jam or a "modern indie" standard. (MG)

Flameshovel, 1658 N. Milwaukee #276, Chicago, IL 60647, www.flameshovel.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Julie Gerstein (JG)

Jawbreaker, Dear You. How good is this record? *Dear You* is so good that I literally *ran away* from singer/guitarist Blake Schwarzenbach when I had the chance to meet him this summer. *I ran away* (all right, walked very quickly) because I knew that if I stuck around, I'd sputter gross-out fan-girl compliments 'till my friends dragged me away, which would have been, no doubt, mortifyingly embarrassing. So I hauled ass away and am left, instead, to write mortifyingly embarrassing things about the record in PP. *Dear You* is a break-up record of the best kind. It's a record of failed relationships and the end of things, and fittingly, *Jawbreaker's* last major release. Filled with Schwarzenbach's raspy, sad vocals and charged, emotional (but *not* emo) lyrics, *Dear You* encapsulates the hurt and cynicism of a break-up like nothing else.

Now I'm listening to: Up Up Down Down Left Right Left Right B A Start, *Perris*, CA (reviewed this issue); Outkast, *Speakerboxx/The Love Below*; a lot of NPR; the Man Man demo.

Madeline Ferguson / Bury Me Standing – split, CD

Madeline Ferguson starts out this split with some intense emcore laced with metal riffs. Bury Me Standing are mostly metal with some heavy breakdowns, which sometimes lead to a melodic kick. Both bands are amazing, but only Madeline Ferguson still exists. (TK)

Oneohfive Records, PO Box 19, Troy, NY 12182, www.oneohfive.com

Majhas – Stepping Into Character, CD

Majhas makes hardcore of the most uninteresting kind: predictable. Despite one instrumental track that highlights their respectable musicianship, their growled vocals and perfunctory interest in melody leave them with a limited range and a bland record. (CC)

Hawthorne Street Records, PO Box 805353, Chicago, IL 60680, www.hawthornestreetrecords.com

Malachai – These Sounds Of The Spirit World, CD

OK, what is this? One part Archers Of Loaf, one part MC Paul Barman and about a million other musical references in between, *These Sounds Of The Spirit World* is either the best or worst record I've heard in a long time. It's tough to say; each track is schizophrenically different from the last. A mass of electronic beats, funny-as-fuck lyrics and crazy vocals, their first track, "O, Amy," might just be a nasty poke at the Get Up Kids song of the same name. (There are gratuitous references to dumb emo girls on this record, after all.) Whatever, it can't stop listening to this thing. Malachai, let's get hitched and make crazy babies. (JG)

Self-released, www.4xbeaver.com

Mammal – Double Nature, CDEP

If you are a complete masochistic necrophiliac, then you might like this raw, obnoxiously noisy EP of static-electronica complete with humming, cracking, buzzing and completely chaotic effects. Your stereo will sound like it's malfunctioning, and according to rumor, it just might. (AJA)

SNSE, PO Box 51021, Kalamazoo, MI 49005, www.snse.net

Manifesto Jukebox – S/T, CDEP

Very solid, rich-sounding Hüsker Dü/Leatherface-influenced trio out of Finland. They play loud with driven guitar and percussion, but it's always fronted with the strong, melodic vocals and lyrics that hit on heavy issues with a ray of hope. (EG)

Boss Tuneage, PO Box 74, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19, UK, www.bosstuneage.com

Mara/Akate – A Significant Portion Of Their Discography, CD

Mara/Akate's new collection of previously released material shreds and tears through 24 songs of almost unlistenable hardcore. Every song saddles heavy guitars and cymbal-pounding drums below screams, wails and louder screams. The resulting sound is perhaps more piercing and terrifying than any sustained nightmare. (BF)

Heroine Records, PO Box 35, 47023, Cesena, Italy, www.heroine.org

Marat – S/T, CD

Even though you're not supposed to judge a book by its cover, I still do it. If I see a slick-looking album, I expect it to be as pleasurable as a colonoscopy. I felt that way about this, but it wasn't intrusive—just boring, predictable guitar work with decent, nasally vocals. (SM)

MoRisen Records, 1409 East Blvd., Suite 116, Charlotte, NC 28203, www.morisen.com

Maxeen – S/T, CD

This is an incredulous, not at all good full-length inspired primarily by Top 40 '80s rock bands like The Police and U2. It's one of the worst pieces of shit I've heard in awhile. It wouldn't even be fun if taken as a joke record. (AE)

Side One Dummy Records, PO Box 2350, Los Angeles, CA 90078, www.sideonedummy.com

Maypole – Burning In Water, Drowning In Flame, CD

Polished hardcore from Europe that immediately brings to mind the likes of Kill Your Idols and Pennywise. Maypole is at the forefront of the fantastic hardcore scene, growing just across the Ocean, as this latest LP demonstrates. (BN)

Gangstyle Records, Ecrivissestraat 41, NL 6125 AW Obbicht, The Netherlands

Mekons – Punk Rock, CD

Does this album go in the regular reviews section or the reissues column? The Mekons, ever punk rock's troublemakers, have managed to drive a truck through a hole in our attempt at making a clearer, more user-friendly, reviews section by releasing a new album of all their old songs. For those unfamiliar with the Mekons, a one-sentence history lesson: A '77 punk band that never broke up, the Mekons pushed the boundaries of what punk could be until it burst open completely. This album, conceived as the band warmed up for 2002's 25th anniversary tour, takes the sound of the Mekons *now*—complete with fiddle, accordion, and various instruments I've never heard of (mbira? shruti box?) and applies it to the songs of the Mekons *then*. The results, I have to say, are decidedly better than the originals. Some of the songs suffer from age—the Mekons did a lot of shout-bang-shout songs back then—but, by and large, the updating has shown just how robust the band was way back when. And how vital they still are today. (DS)

Quarterstick Records PO Box 25342 Chicago IL 60625

Media Whores – Master of Pop Hits, CD

I am a huge fan of the Media Whores and their label, Break Up Records. Meanwhile, Screaming Apple Records had the decency to make this great disc of their singles, compilation tracks and some unreleased material as well. The Media Whores (formerly Pat Dull and His Media Whores) may be the best power-pop band of the last decade. Listen to the lyrics, and you can pick up nods to Cheap Trick, The Who and many others. You know that the members are big-time music lovers and record collectors. Take one look at the cover, and see the large collections that they must have—better than your local crappy music store. Normally record collectors collect because they can't create. They become experts in the songs. The Media Whores actually use this knowledge to create some of their own pop masterpieces. I have reviewed many of their singles in these pages, and there wasn't a bad one in the bunch. Everyone should own this great record. It's a party disc that everyone will think they've heard before—the ultimate pop compliment. (EA)

Screaming Apple Records, Düsternichstr. 14, 50939, Koeln, Germany, www.screaming-apple-records.de



Mercury Radio Theater – The Death And Life Of The Undead Boy, CD

A small theater troupe in your headset, this follows the childhood of a vampire boy named Victor who gets equally harassed and ignored in life. Reading tracks are separated by music that's part *Magnum P.I.*, part stock chase scene fare with spasms that contrast the lissome storyline. (SM)

Angryson Records, 47 Douglas Ave., Mansfield, OH 44906, www.angrysonrecords.com

Middle Distance, The – Foreword, CD

Melodic hardcore poised for bigger things. Slick and catchy rock with talented music and great songwriting. Well-sung vocals with occasional falsetto for effect. They almost remind me of Farside or Game-face with more bite, but there's a more youthful element that should appeal to fans of current hardcore/punk. Good stuff. (NS)

Young At Heart, PO Box 1235, Huntington Beach, CA 92647

Minders, The – The Future's Always Perfect, CD

In my notes, I wrote that this reminded me of the Apples In Stereo. Well, the band features Robert Schneider of that band, so there you go. In that vein, it's simple, catchy pop with keyboards that will be popular with the indie-rock set. It doesn't do much for me. (KR)

Future Farmer Recordings, 400 Brannan St., Ste. 4, San Francisco, CA 94107, www.futurefarmer.com

Minds, The – Plastic Girls, CD

Elvis Costello notwithstanding, keyboard-heavy pop rock is supposed to be fun, unsubstantial dance music. There's nothing wrong with providing a soundtrack for drinking and pogoing, but it has a limited shelf life. This record is fun, tightly wound pop with claws. Sometimes that's good enough. (RR)

Dirtnap Records, PO Box 21249, Seattle, WA 98111, www.dirtnaprecs.com

Misfits, The – Project 1950, CD

I wanna like this CD a lot more than I actually do. This incarnation of The Misfits features bassist/singer Jerry Only (technically, the only actual "Misfit" from the classic Danzig days), Marky Ramone on drums and (drum roll please) Dez Cadena on guitar. Considering the punk pedigree of these three musicians, I was really looking forward to hearing what they'd come up with. Unfortunately, they decided to do an "oldies" record covering classic rock tunes from the '50s. Now, punk has always had a link to that initial wave of rock 'n' roll, but these guys just don't get it right. It's way too cheesy. The original versions of tunes like "Great Balls Of Fire" and "Runaway" had a boogie, a swing, to them that's painfully absent in The Misfits' versions. About the only good thing I can say about this album is I'm glad Dez is getting some work. (AJ)

Misfits Records, PO Box 2043, Radio City Station, New York, NY 10101, www.misfits.com

Mr. California And The State Police – Audio Hallucinations, CD

Whoa, 51 short, noisy spurts of guitar-electronic clash ranging from the brutal to the cartoon-ish. They examine such subjects as soda pop, drugs and Bobby Trendy. Some of the shortest bursts clock in at about four seconds. It was amusing at first, but a bad trip overall. (AJA)

Load Records, PO Box 35, Providence, RI 09201, www.loadrecords.com

Missouri Loves Company – Start The Seduction, CDEP

Think early Rainer Maria—complete with boy/girl lyrical tradeoffs—but energized by pissed off energy that's not afraid to take it out on their vocal and guitar cords. Often wades in no wave/experimental waters. (EG)

Lola Records, 1010 University Ave., #607, San Diego, CA 92103-3395, www.lolarecords.net

Reviewer Spotlight: Jason Gooder (JJG)

Jack O' Fire, The Destruction Of Squaresville. Years before there were the White Stripes doing their extremely lo-fi blues rock, there was Jack O' Fire combining equal parts of the blues and punk to create this album, which drove blues back to its origins and unleashed wailing squalls of feedback, courtesy of Tim Kerr. Walter Daniels' vocals sounded like they were recorded in a tin can. This album will bother any blues purist, but if you like punk rock and the blues, this is the best melding ever. The songs are all covers, ranging from old blues players like Howlin' Wolf and Willie Dixon to punkers like Negative Approach—and they all sound natural being played like blues songs. If you're a fan of Tim Kerr, you should have this in your collection.

Monday In London – The Red Machine, CD

Holy shit! These vocals are way over the top. In the first song, the singer switches from really broken singing, followed by a falsetto that comes out of nowhere, then there's some screaming right before the chorus. The music is well done and sounds a little like Saves The Day. (TK)

Indianola Records, www.indianolarecords.com

Most Precious Blood – Our Lady Of Annihilation, CD

This is one intense and *old school* NYHC recording. I always thought Astoria, Queens, was the HC breeding ground, but this band comes out swinging from Brooklyn. If I weren't going to have a back surgery this week, I'd definitely be in the pit singing along with these lyrics. (DI)

Trustkill Records, 23 Farm Edge Lane, Tinton Falls, NJ 07724, www.trustkill.com

Moto-Litas, The – S/T, CDEP

The Moto-Litas kick some major rock 'n' roll ass with their heavy guitar licks and saucy, southern, we-don't-give-a-damn vocals. The Run-aways and Suzi Quatro will be nodding their heads in silent approval when this band is heading the rock revolution. (MG)

Self-released, www.motolitas.com

Movies, The – In One Era Out The Other, CD

The Movies are four seemingly introverted musicians who must have really liked Joy Division somewhere along the line. James' subterranean voice has the power to morph such potentially banal lyrics as "It's snowing outside again/ You think more when you're sleeping" into eerie pronouncements booming from the voice-box of Father Time. The music is sneaky and seductively frightening. You ever get a weird visceral rocking in your body from some shows? Like when the bass creeps up your belly? Well, I got that listening to this. Some of my favorite moments throughout this album include the quick ramble of the track "Scary Footsteps." The lyrics "There're 24 parts in a day that divide me from you" from "Creation Lake" and the Lux Interior-like yelp, "Can I have your autograph/ I finally met you at last" from "Autograph." Check The Movies out. It's like the Beat Happening with shades. (SP)

Gern Blandsten, PO Box 356, River Edge, NJ 07661, www.gernblandsten.com

Murder Your Darlings – S/T, CD

This band has a lot of '70s hard rock guitar riffs combined with scratchy-voiced yelling and some song structures that recall early '90s grunge (Melvins, Tad, Nirvana, etc.). The guitar playing is great, too. I especially liked "When In Rome," which sounds like Lemmy singing a lost Nirvana song. (JJG)

Self-released, www.murderyourdarlings.com

Murderer's Row – Menace To Sobriety, CD

Murderer's Row features the old singer from Stigmata. This is oi/punk/street that gets one fist in the air while the other holds a beer. The band got in a horrible accident a few years ago, and after a reattached finger, healed broken bones, they are back with their debut LP. (EA)

GSR, Ecrevissestraat 41, 6125 AW Obbicht, The Netherlands, www.gsrmusic.com

Naked Aggression – The Gut Wringing Machine, CD

This is essentially a reissue of Naked Aggression's final album, though it's a different recording than the version released in 1998 on Cargo. Then as now, it's generic HC with cheesy lyrics. (JC)

Rodent Popsicle Records, PO Box 1143, Allston, MA 02134, www.rodentpopsicle.com

Narcissus – Crave And Collapse, CD

How fucking disappointing. The cover. The band name. Everything here points to thrash or metal. The CD starts off all right, but it slowly turns into another fucking Cave-In rip off with New Found Glory vocals. Ugh. (TK)

Abacus Recordings, 2323 W. El Segundo Blvd, Hawthorne, CA 90250, www.abacusrecordings.com

Nervous Cop – S/T, CD

Hella and Deerhoof drummers + harp player = Nervous Cop. Some of it's programmed, most of it is live, and all of it's pretty weird (but driving). I like some avant-garde material, but this is two folks beating the fuck out of their drum kits. Kind of cool, though. (DM)

5RC, PO Box 1190 Olympia, WA 98507-1190, www.5rc.com

Neurotic Swingers – Artrats, CD

This crazy French punk band is straight-ahead throw back punk with attitude. Ten songs that clock in at like two minutes apiece—get 'em before they run away. (BC)

Lollipop Records, 7 Impasse Monsegur, 13016 Marseille, France, www.chez.com/lollipoprecords

Neutral Mute – S/T, 7"

Just when you think the record must be skipping because the same annoying sound keeps repeating over and over again, you realize, no, it's just a shitty, repetitive song. (JG)

Run Roc Records, www.run-roc.com

New Bomb Turks – Switchblade Tongues, Butterknife Brains, CD

The Turks' 10-plus years of experience shows on this great CD, which features singles, EP tracks and some previously unreleased songs. There is a lot of range: some Heartbreakers-style rock, some harder, faster punk, even a bluesy instrumental. I heard they broke up recently, which is a shame, as this is a consistently good album. (JJG)

Gearhead Records, PO Box 421219, San Francisco, CA 94142, www.gearheadrecords.com

New Brutalism / Hit Self Destruct – split, 7"

New Brutalism's "Aim For The Jugular," is a dark funk-rock tune, somewhat in the vein of Primus. The H.S.D. tune "026" has an almost Middle Eastern sounding riff with a driving, machine-gun drum beat. Both offerings are intriguing enough to make me want to hear more. (AJ)

Electric Human Project, 500 South Union St., Wilmington, DE 19105, www.electrichumanproject.com

New Grenada – Hot War, CD

Straight up indie rock with a mean streak, in the vein of Trackstar or Beulah. A good disc full of choice melodies, though it's a bit on the short side. (JG)

Plumline Records, PO Box 213, Marysville, MI 48040, www.madmerch.com/plumline

New Jacobim Club, The – Retake The Throne, CD

I don't know where to start. This record is sucky cheesiness, but in a way, it's almost awesome. These lads play poppy punk with a death-metal twist and creepy synths, imitating the Misfits while paying homage to Iron Maiden and Norwegian black metal. So bad it's good? (MG)

Manitcore Music Group, PO Box 7726, Saskatoon SK, S7K 4R4, Canada

New Luck Toy – S/T, 7"

This gem was a shining light amongst my review pile's mediocrity. The music is indescribable, which is what makes it so great. Fun, beer-tinged rock 'n' roll with garage chord structures, sassy vocals and an early punk feel. Sounds simple, but it's really quite different. Just buy the record and hear for yourself. (MG)

Self-released, newlucktoy@hotmail.com

☛ New Terror Class – Did You Hear That We Fucked?, 12"

What the fuck did I do to deserve all of these disturbing-ass records? If you can get past song titles like "Give Me Your E-mail Address, I'll Send You Some Sick Shit" and "Hunks...Did You Call Me A Fag?" you may actually be intrigued by the contents. Mixing nu-wave and pop and rock elements, this foursome brings together the tricks that Velvet Underground, the Cars and the Briefs utilized to their advantage. At the very least the record features an unsullied sound that impresses with its uniqueness. Recommended for open-minded individuals who are not easily offended and are fascinated by the unusual. (BN)

Self-released, PO Box 3192, Kent, OH 44240

☛ 999 – Outburst! Demos & Outtakes '77-'79, CD

Punk wasn't always a downward spiral of self-reference. Initially, it was a distillation of some of the best elements of rock 'n' roll, r&b, soul and reggae. With no frame of reference, bands were forced to look to other genres for inspiration. While not always remembered with the elite names of the original wave of British punk bands, 999 was as original as any of them. These alternate takes and demos from their early years aren't the best introduction to the band's hectic, poppy punk; a proper singles collection or one of their first albums would be your best bet. However, this disc provides a new look at the band's earliest period and won't just please die-hard fans. (RR)

Overground Records, PO Box 1NW, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE99 1NW, UK, www.overgroundrecords.co.uk

90 Day Men – Panda Park, CD

If you move in post-genre directions far enough, and in just the right way, do you become soft rock? That may be the object lesson here, but only on the surface. In descriptive terms, it's pretty straight piano rock, but if you listen closely, it's just fucked enough to never get played on commercial radio. (RR)

Southern Records, PO Box 577375, Chicago, IL 60657, www.southern.com

☛ Non-Prophets – Hope, CD

Sage Francis is a brilliant MC. Never a wasted line, never a wasted rhyme, never wasting time. His songs are almost too much to handle—almost. Everything he says implies so much more than words seem to be able to express. Then there's Joe Beats, the production half of team Non-Prophets. His beats may not be the flashiest, but his rhythms and Sage's words are like an old married couple that's much more comfortable together than they are apart. Like his full-length, *Personal Journals*, *Hope* features no guest MCs. On the same

tip, Joe Beats handles all of the beat-making, so there's no one else to hide behind or to blame a shitty track on—but there are no shitty tracks. This is a record that takes full responsibility for its actions, but has fun in the meantime. After listening to this album, I'm 100 times more excited for the next Sage Francis full-length, one that I'm sure that Joe Beats will turn up on as well. A must for true modern hip-hop fans. (DH)

Lex Records, PO Box 34207, London, NW5 1EF, UK, www.lexrecords.com

Nora – Dreamers & Deadmen, CD

Metallic hardcore with some stoner-rock tendencies. They have a lot of interesting guitar parts, from rocking to screeching to chugging. The rhythms and vocals are almost catchy without taking anything away from their anger and strength. They're not reinventing the wheel, but they're rocking and rolling the shit out of it. (NS)

Trustkill, 23 Farm Edge Lane, Tinton Falls, NJ 07724, www.trustkill.com

Not, The – S/T, CDEP

Three girls, one guy, a lot of gimmickry and even more keyboards sounds like a recipe for disaster, but this Cincinnati band pulls off an interesting, rhythmic, art-rock experience. Funny, goofy, and self-deprecating, this artsy quartet doesn't take itself too seriously and thus makes a decent EP. (AE)

Shake It Records, 4156 Hamilton Ave., Cincinnati, OH 45223, www.shakeitrecords.com

Ott, Jeff – Will Work For Diapers, 2xCD

This atrocious double acoustic folk album from punk's most assimilated God-loving hippie is ripe with embarrassingly awful lyrics. The music is nothing to write home about, either. If these same trite words were set to rocking Fifteen or Crimpshrine-styled punk, this would rule. It's well intentioned and radical, but unlistenable. (AE)

Subcity, PO Box 7495, Van Nuys, CA 91409, www.subcity.net

Our New Year – 31:00, CD

Indie rock of the impassioned sort with dual vocalists who remind me of Hot Water Music. It's musically similar to early '90s Midwest emo, but it doesn't seem powerful enough for the vocals, though. It sounds too jangly for their hoarse vocal style. Maybe it's just the recording. (NS)

Self-released, www.ournewyear.com

Pale Man Made – Show of Hands, CDEP

This "half-boy, half-girl" quartet (to quote the band's phrase) from northeast England plays some mean-ass punky garage pop. Quick drumbeats, a sprawling guitar, driven bass and overlapping boy-girl vocals make this short EP (three tracks) a delight to experience. Track two, "Winning Streak," wins the race with great energy. (SP)

Pinch Records, 188 Gardner Park, North Shields, Tyne & Wear, UK, www.palemanmade.co.uk

☛ Part II – Weeping, Wailing, And Gnashing Of Teeth, 10"

Compared to You And I as well as Yage, these guys don't disappoint. First of all, this is a clear 10" limited to 100, so already I am pretty honored that they decided to ship this to me. Second, there is a lot of sincerity in the songs that seems to get lost in a lot of current music. This is a great release, and I hope to hear more soon. (TK)

Coldbringer, PO Box 65144, Los Angeles, CA 90065, www.coldbringerrecordings.com

Pelvis – Jet Black Italic, CD

It's free jazz! It's math rock! It's free jazz math rock! It's not exactly what you might expect with such a jokey band name, but these guys seem to know what they're doing. It's revenge of the high-school band geeks if you ask me. (JG)

Purgatone Records, c/o K. Wade, 818 Oneida Place, Madison WI 53711, www.pelvishifi.com

Panamerican Standard, The – S/T, CDEP

This is rockin' post-punk tinged with emo. It's well-executed, but it's missing something, and the longer I listen, the more it reminds me of Cursive, especially vocally. (Track two even sounds like it has cello in it.) Still, it's good and may grow on me. (KR)

Die Die Diamond Records, PO Box 161925 Austin, TX 78716, www.diediediamond.com

Park – It Won't Snow Where You're Going, CD

Park has created new genre, which I call "noose-core." It sounds like the swell/breakdown/swell music accompanied by dissonant vocals that's so popular these days. Oh, and most of the songs are about killing yourself. Less talk, more action. (AA)

Lobster Records, PO Box 1473, Santa Barbara, CA 93102, www.lobsterrecords.com

Park, Mike – For The Love Of Music, CD

Mike Park brings his passion back to the musical forum with this solo acoustic effort combining gentle vocals and earnest writing. Concentrating on topics closest to his heart, he tackles racism, politics and activism on the restful songs that comprise this worthwhile debut. (BN)

Sub City Records, PO Box 7495, Van Nuys, CA 91409, www.subcity.net

Particle Zoo – Go-Go, CDEP

Sappy, boring art rock. There are only four tunes on this, and one's a cover of The Beatles' "Eleanor Rigby." I don't really dig the Fab Four's version, but it's golden compared to this drive. The three originals aren't any better. (AJ)

Self released, www.pzoo.com

☛ Parts & Labor / Tyondai Braxton, – Rise, Rise, Rise, split CD

This disc is a perfect pairing of experimental artists. Parts & Labor add a traditional element to their experimental sound (sort of)—bagpipes—and build off the eccentric, shadowy effect the instrument offers by laying down bright chord progressions with an intoxicatingly heavy hand. That's just the warm up. Then come "Voltage," "Probably Feeling Better Already" and "The Endless Air Show," three tracks driven by frenzied guitar lines and calculated pummelings of bass and drums that still maintain good, nonlinear melodies. Tyondai Braxton may not play all the instruments, but he acts as composer and con-

Reviewer Spotlight: Dave Hofer (DH)

Wu-Tang Clan, Enter The Wu-Tang: 36 Chambers. People (myself included) often refer to a hip-hop album as "dirty" or "raw" to describe its sound, but this record is, without question, the rawest and dirtiest of them all. Mastermind RZA created a musical landscape so bleak and violent that one can't help but hear the sound of the New York streets that the Wu were straight off of when this record dropped in 1993. *36 Chambers* not only spawned 12 classic joints, including "Bring The Ruckus" and "Protect Ya Neck," but equally classic first solo records from emcees Method Man (*Tical*), Raekwon (*Only Built 4 Cuban Linx*), Ol' Dirty Bastard (*Return To The 36 Chambers, The Dirty Version*), GZA (*Liquid Swords*) and Ghostface Killah (*Ironman*). All produced by RZA, they were just five more bricks in the house that Wu built. Unfortunately, this same house has since faltered under the weight of lofty follow-up expectations that could never be achieved after the sheer brilliance of *36 Chambers*, but those first six records more than make up for any mistakes the Wu later made. All of the lyrics on *Enter The Wu-Tang* tell a story, all of their flows are above reproach, and all of RZA's beats make you bob your head in time without even knowing it. Buy this album immediately, and listen to what everyone else has been imitating for the last decade: a flawless hip-hop record.

I'm causing more family feuds than Richard Dawson (current new apartment listening): Psychedelic Khrushchev (Scott Bobek solo material); Michael Hobart (solo); Gauntlet (Chicago's full metal assault); Cracked Out (great and hilarious hip-hop); Winner Kills All (great new Chicago hardcore). Fresh!



ductor for an odd orchestra that's part synthetic, part organic. Braxton incorporates electronic juts with the more eccentric possibilities of flute, viola and cello ("Stand There"), and he charges with a chug of drums and a rhythmic yowl ("Disintegrating Reels"). He creates a whirl with a piano melody woven into the bleep of speeding reels from a slot machine that tumbles away into the synthesizer's artificial air. *Rise, Rise, Rise* is definitely a successful experiment in form and matter from some very promising scientist. (CC)

Narnack Records, 381 Broadway, Fourth Floor #3, New York, NY 10013, www.narnackrecords.com

Peelander-Z – P-Bone Steak, CD

Crazy! Wacky! Punk rock! Japanese cartoon wrestling action punk! Fast and fun and funny! Number one best live show! Peelander-Z makes you very happy! I am very happy! How do you like your steak? MED!-UM RARE! (JC)

Swell Records, PO Box 287004, New York, NY 10128, www.swellrecords@aol.com

Pelican – Australasia, CD

This is like a stoned nerd's dream come true: always heavy, sometimes technical prog-metal without all those annoying words to get in the way. If only Rush had gone the same route. (RR)

Hydra Head Records, PO Box 291430, Los Angeles, CA 90029, www.hydrahead.com

Phoenix Bodies / Enkephalin – split, CD

Enkephalin rips through the first six tracks playing mathy screamo with a horde of changes, reminding me loosely of Dillinger Escape Plan. Playing nightmarish, spastic post-hardcore with blast beats and insane energy, Phoenix Bodies are the reason to get this split. Both bands have Midwest roots, and you can hear them. (TK)

Init Records, PO Box 3432, Mankato, MN 56002, www.initrecords.com

Pipedown – Mental Weaponry, CD

Metallic guitars, melodic-yet-angsty vocals, gang vocal choruses, socially conscious messages—obviously punk history isn't being rewritten here. Yet, Pipedown manages to rise above the sum of these typical melodicore standards and create an engaging take on some old standbys. (RR)

A-F Records, PO Box 71266, Pittsburgh, PA 15213, www.a-frecords.com

Prewar Yardsale – Lowdown, CD

I'm not known to be the biggest anti-folk fan, though I do enjoy listening to the Vaselines and the Moldy Peaches occasionally. With that in mind, I don't know what makes them good. Is it good because it's so bad? A married couple from New York, Prewar Yardsale is an anti-folk band. They make music with a guitar and some buckets, almost never able to go too long before jumping out of tempo. The lyrics are silly, and the recording is very lo-fi. If you are into anti-folk, you will probably like this a lot. (TK)

Olive Juice, PO Box 20678, Tompkins Square Station, New York, NY 10009, www.olivejuicemusic.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Don Irwin (DI)

Carlos Santana And Mahavishnu John McLaughlin, Love Devotion Surrender. This 1973 tribute album to John Coltrane's 1964 *Love Supreme* includes musician Jan Hammer, of *Miami Vice* fame, on drums. The album isn't a song for song cover and *Love Supreme* and includes the first movement: "Acknowledgement" and not "Resolution," "Pursuance" or "Part 4-Psalm." What does it sound like? These two guitarists translate John Coltrane's saxophone and blow your mind with this devotional music dedicated to Sri Chinmoy. The funniest part is trying to figure out which solo belongs to whom. You can hear Santana's Latin-jazz influence and McLaughlin's free-jazz fretwork. The five tracks include Coltrane's "Naima" from the 1959 *Giant Steps* recording and a song called "The Life Divine," which is credited to McLaughlin, but sounds like a reworking of "Love Supreme" and a traditional hymn called "Let Us Go Into The House Of The Lord." Santana went on a year later to record with John Coltrane's wife, Alice, on *Illuminations*, which can also be found on a remix recording of both albums by Bill Laswell. Santana should've replaced Garcia in the Dead when he died. If Santana can play drums with Hammer, he surely should play drums with Mickey Hart. That badass combo would have saved us from hearing Santana on the radio with Rob Thomas or the singer from The Calling.

Now playing: Superman Is Dead, *Kuta Rock City*; Bali's finest punk band, Rai Ko Ris, *Himalayan Frostbite* (reviewed this issue); Nepal's best punk band, Out Hud, *Live At The 9:30 Club*; Outkast, *Speakerboxxx/The Love Below*; Elliott Smith, *XO, Either/Or and Figure 8*.

Prewar Yardsale – She Used To Be Cool, 7"

Prewar Yardsale features monotone vocals with albeit humorous lyrics backed by simple, fuzzed-out guitars and some percussion here and there. The fact that all of the songs are similarly structured proves boring. (EG)

A OK Records, www.a-ok-records.com

Prissy's Prizm – Red Hot Special, CD

Sometimes in troubled times, nihilistic entertainment can serve as a much needed escape. Thus enters Prissy's Prizm, a brutal band that plays mainly fast songs with thick, heavy guitars and hardcore vocals. There are a few slower songs, but nothing slower than mid-tempo. The lyrics are ferocious and violent, and they remind me of some of GWAR's better words. One song, "Fuck This World," may be the first song about literally having intercourse with "mother earth." If this album sounds dumb, it should. But it's mesmerizing anyway and stands out from the pack. I think the whole thing is supposed to be a concept album about some ancient succubus released into the form of three male slaves forced to do her bidding via punk rock or some such silly garbage, but whatever's going on here gets this reviewer's approval. (AE)

Self-released, PO Box 995, Sacramento, CA 95812, www.prissysprizm.com

Prowl, The – Misery, CD

Oh look, it's another early Los Angeles punk-influenced band. If you like the Damned, drinking, disaffection, the Adolescents, teenage fury and Samhain, you'll love The Prowl. (JG)

DeadAlive, PO Box 42593, Philadelphia, PA 19101, www.deadaliverecords.com

Pulses, The – Little Brothers, CDEP

The Pulses play stripped down and jagged post-punk with more style and melody than most. Wire and Mission Of Burma are starting points. Despite the angular (and sometimes angry) riffs, sharp time changes and disjointed rhythms, the focus always stays on good songs that never overstay their welcome. Great stuff. (JC)

Dirtnap Records, PO Box 21249, Seattle, WA 98111, www.dirtnaprecs.com

Purification – Banging The Drums Of War, CD

Militant vegan sXe is back! Crushing metallic hardcore provides the background for lyrics concerning your favorite topics: holy war, flesh and Earth's imminent doom. Now go put on some size 40 Blind jeans, a skirt shirt and punch your mom for eating a burger. (NS)

Uprising Records, PO Box 480 Laguna Beach, CA 92652, www.uprisingrecords.com

Queers, The/ Manges- Acid Beaters, split CD

The Kings of East Coast pop punk come back with even more covers and pop-punk action. This time they rock out with their buddies The Manges, from Italy. As if you really needed another version of Cheap Trick's "Surrender." (BC)

Stardumb Records, PO Box 21145, 3001 AC Rotterdam, The Netherlands, www.stardumbrecords.com

Quick Fix Kills – Saint Something, CD

Snotty rock with lots of energy, but only when they feel like it, it seems. A farm team version of At The Drive-In. Not bad, not great, just sorta hovering. (DH)

My Pal God Records, 47 Hardy Drive, Princeton, NJ 08540, www.mypalgodrecords.com

Quill, The – Hooray! It's A Deathtrip, CD

This really isn't punk rock—it's way bigger. *Rolling Stone* should be reviewing it, and MTV should be playing it so people could remember or learn that rock 'n' roll isn't the Strokes and tight thrift-store T-shirts. It's AC/DC and schoolboy outfits! And it's The Quill. These guys play triumphant rock 'n' roll along the lines of Fu Manchu, Queens Of The Stone Age or Soundgarden (especially in the vocals). Think lots of fuzzed out barre chords and wailing vocals. They do throw some curves in there though, from Middle Eastern sounding music to bluesy riffs. For the most part, this is straight-up rock. I mean, with lyrics like "Bow before me/ because I'm God," could it be anything else or any more kickass? They're from Sweden, too, so expect great production. Now quit pretending you were all into Kyuss and play catch-up with these guys. (NS)

SPV, Ste. 203, 1917 W. Fourth Ave., Vancouver, BC V6J 1M7, Canada, www.spvusa.com

Rai Ko Ris – Himalayan Frostbite, 7"

This four-song 7" by this trio from Kathmandu is really amazing—I want to listen to it over and over. Half of the songs are in Nepali, but don't worry, they are translated for you. The other half are sung in English. Dance DJ Talvin Singh might be the sound of the new Asian underground, but Rai Ko Ris are the sound of the Nepali underground, which is one of revolution and punk-rock ethics. In the papers, you can read about the Maoist insurgent rebels fighting government security forces for a better life. "Jaro Maina Ayo" is about the long winters in the Himalayan country and the other option living in an overcrowded apartment in America. (DI)

Bat Attak Records, PO Box 153073 Tampa, FL 33684

Railsplitter – 860 Some Odd Lbs., CDEP

In my mind, 7-foot tall Satanic bikers made this music. Anything else wouldn't fit something this heavy and boogie-laden. Distorted, throaty howls, thick riffs and a greasy groove: I defy you not to think Alabama Thunder Pussy. (RR)

Self-released, kissmygrit@aol.com

Rameros – Teenage Zombie Massacre, CD

Twenty-eight tracks of mayhem emanates from my CD player. This is hardcore that slips a little pop-punk into it. It easily could have fit onto any of those early Lookout! compilations. But the recording is weak, the snare drum sounds like a cardboard box, and the bass is almost nonexistent. (EA)

Self-released, 1675 Montague St. Deltona, FL 32725, www.rameros.com

Reno Divorce – You're Only Making It Worse, CD

Check Mike Ness for teeth marks—that's how hard these guys bite the Social Distortion thing. It's a well-done homage, but similar enough to be eerie. The best moments are when they deviate from that path, but with songs titles like "Hard Luck Story," it's hard *not* to draw those comparisons. (RR)
Boss Tuneage, PO Box 74, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19 2WB, UK, www.bosstuneage.com

Ringenberg, Jason – A Day At The Farm With Farmer Jason, CD

Children's music is music for the soul. Alt-country rocker turned kids' songsmith Jason Ringenberg soothes youngsters with this singalong concept album. These 11 roots songs about farm life are silly, carefree and catchy. There are animal sounds, spoken word bits and a few lessons—a down-home collection for the whole family. (BF)
Yep Roc Records, PO Box 4921, Chapel Hill, NC 27515, www.yeproc.com

Rites, The – S/T, CD

Members of Tear It Up and Down In Flames do straight up '80s East Coast hardcore. It's fast and brutal, excellent mosh pit music, but it doesn't stand out much from the other 10,000 bands that sound like this. This CD collects their EPs and a live radio set. (MG)
Deadalive, PO Box 42593, Philadelphia, PA 19101, www.deadaliverecords.com

Riverdales – Phase Three, CD

This could very well be a lost Ramones album from 1978. At this point in their careers, it seems like Weasel and Vapid can crank these tunes out in their sleep, but thankfully they're wide awake and full of energy when they record this stuff. (JC)
145 Records, 3368 Governor Dr., Suite 224F, San Diego, CA 92122, www.145records.com

Robot Attack! – Demo No. Three Point Zero!, 7"

Here is a studio-project band from Lehigh Valley, Pa., with four songs of experimental punk rock similar to Man Is The Bastard. The band members have been in around 30 punk/metal punk bands, so they have their chops down. It's worth a listen. (DI)
Square of Opposition Records, 2935 Fairview St., Bethlehem, PA 18020, www.sofa.fakeindependent.com

Rockets And Bluelights – A Smashed City, 10"

Guitars dunk the few trespassing words that snuck into the recording studio uninvited. The gun fighting twin guitars lay out a trail of angular notes that make it feel like Thursday on a Sunday evening. It's emo that's done right, with moderation allowing it to be swallowed. (SM)
Redder Records, 1600 East Ave., #401, Rochester, NY 14610, www.redderrecords.com.

Rocket From The Tombs – Rocket Redux, CD

The greatest punk album never recorded has now been recorded. Aside from a few bootlegs, the legacy of Rocket From The Tombs has been a footnote in the history of the two bands it spawned, Dead Boys and Pere Ubu. Last year saw the release of practice and live recordings from RFTT's short (less than a year) lifespan. A new version of the band toured, with Television guitarist Richard Lloyd replacing deceased guitarist/singer Peter Laughner, and now they've recorded. Given the rough quality of the 1975 material, the band easily could have gone too far to clean up the new versions of these songs. Thank-

fully, the production is good, but not slick. It's doubtful that these versions, classics long associated with the Dead Boys and Pere Ubu, will satisfy most purists, but these recordings are closer to the original Rocket From The Tombs versions anyway. The only song to lose something when compared to the original is "30 Seconds Over Tokyo." The manic, ultra-hot audio in the '75 version of the song made its loudest parts climatic, but here it's too subdued. Otherwise, this redux finally gives the world proper versions of some of the best punk songs from any era. (RR)

Smog Veil Records, 550 W. Plumb Lane, Reno, NV 89509, www.smogveil.com

Roger Miret And The Disasters – S/T, CD

Members of such renowned acts as Agnostic Front, The Krays and The Bruisers join forces to deliver one of the freshest street-punk records in recent memory. Full of singalong choruses, dynamic guitars and rapid pace, Roger Miret's return to the scene is a fulfilling experience. Don't overlook this one. (BN)

Hellcat Records, 2798 Sunset Blvd. Los Angeles, CA 90026, www.hell-cat.com

Rogue Nation – The Sedition, CD

Heavy-hitting hardcore with plenty of breakdowns and pseudo-creepy lyrics about not being afraid to die. There's a special vocal appearance by Chris Hannah of Propagandhi. (TK)

Uprising Records, PO Box 480 Laguna Beach, CA 92652, www.uprisingrecords.com

Roy – Big City Sin And Small Town Redemption, CD

Roy, former members of Botch and Harkonen, reveal a mellower sound by playing accessible folk-rock. Who would of thought those behind such punishing hardcore outfits had such a keen rock sensibility? The album has a various mix of songs and not too much twang. The band sounds similar to Jets To Brazil in their thoughtful, understated songwriting that is catchy as well. Listening to this album the following scenario came to mind: If Blake Schwarzenbach, Davey von Bohlen and Jeff Tweedy were to play the roles of renegade chapped cowboys in a low-budget western, Roy would be the guys in the saloon providing accompaniment to their thoughtful brooding. (AJA)

Fueled By Ramen, PO Box 12563, Gainesville FL 32604, www.fueledbyramen.com

Roy – The Red EP, CDEP

This sounds nothing like Botch. "Neither does most music created every single day, idiot," you reply. But the comparison is relevant: Half of Roy was in Botch. However, Roy is not even really 50 percent like Botch. Roy plays moving, country/folk-tinged indie/punk like the Meat Puppets and FIREHOSE did. (RR)

Crash Records, 1122 East Pike St., PMB 1037, Seattle, WA 98122, www.crashrecordings.com

Ruby Doe, The – Dream Engine Blue, CD

Here's your pretty standard, Fugazi-style post-rock version of punk, but less post and more rock. Maybe that's why it doesn't sound so standard. The Ruby Doe balance the loose-groove/gnarled-out approach to old hardcore with good old-fashioned solid songwriting. It works. (RR)
Hometown Tragedy Records / self-released, 4403 48th Ave. SW, Seattle, WA 98116, www.therubydoe.com

Rum Diary, The – Poisons That Save Lives, CD

This indie-rock band from Cotati, Calif., has it all: swirly guitars, a load of drums, a mysterious lead-singer and lots of moody experimentation. The songs fluctuate from a dense, hard sound to beautifully cast, spellbinding instrumentals with feedback, distorted vocals and interesting depth. Lulling and uplifting at the same time. (SP)

Substandard Records, PO Box 310, Berkeley, CA 94701, www.substandard.com

Run Chico Run – Shashbo, CD

Twilight music for an evening of demented space-gazing. Churning organs and Sharpied basslines play with words that confuse and craze. You want this. (SM)

Self-released, 1057 Richmond Ave., Victoria, BC, V8S 3Z6, Canada, www.runchicorun.com

Rymodee / Ghostmice – split, CD

Ghostmice supports Rymodee (This Bike Is A Pipe Bomb) on these 15 tracks. There's a total roots-country feel on this album, complete with acoustic guitar, piano, saw, harmonica, mandolin and violin. The heartbroken lyrics and often playful instrumentals pick up some of the slack left by Rymodee's not-so-hot vocals. (EG)

Friends & Relatives, PO Box 23, Bloomington, IN 47402, friendsandrelativesrecords@yahoo.com

Saigot – Fastened to Contrast, CD

Saigot's intricate instrumentation and spot-on mixing pull together their strange and beautiful arrangements. They set dark lyrics and vocals against deep, drum-driven rhythms, creating a tension that sets a brooding, hypnotic tone. If Factory Records were still in business, these guys would have an ideal home. (CC)

Spare Chant Records, 3300 Main St. #203, Dallas, TX 75226, www.sparechantrecords.com

Salem – Love It Or Leave Me, CDEP

Salem plays aggressive post-hard core with a melodic heaviness—not too hard, not too light. I like the music and the way it's played, but the Tim Kasher-style (Cursive) vocals didn't do a lot for me. At least they're on key. Regardless, this is a good debut. (KR)

Fiddler Records, 8023 Beverly Blvd., #5, PO Box 440, Los Angeles, CA 90048-4523, www.fiddlerrecords.com

Savath And Savalas – Apropa't, CD

Soft and sleepy Brazilian music abounds on this duo's new tropicalia release. Puvuelo's refined femininity sets off comparisons to Astrud Gilberto, as does the streaming frailty of the music compare to Jobim's great pieces. But whereas Jobim's sound has a definite pop quality, Savath & Savalas play music with an endless stream of consciousness type of mood. Songs linger, ebb and flow, with various experimental sounds for its genre. No '60s sensations for this band. Instead one discovers the dreary coolness of such tracks as "Sol De Media Tarde," ("late afternoon sun") "Te Quiero Pero Por Otro Lado" ("I want you, but in another way") and "Um Girassol Da Cor De Seu Cabelo" ("a sunflower the color of your hair"). As one can see, the same gloomy brilliance applies to the song titles. An experimentally unique effort. (SP)

Warp Records, PO Box 25378, London, NW5 1GL, UK, www.warprecords.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Ari Joffe (AJ)

Ted Nugent, Live At Hammersmith '79. If you think The Stooges and The MC5 played "high energy, Detroit rock 'n' roll," you ain't heard nothin' yet. Ted Nugent was every bit as ferocious as those dudes. Plus, he and his band could actually tune their guitars, stand erect and play a full show. (And this here isn't The Amboy Dukes. They sucked. *Hammersmith* is vintage Nugent from the "Cat Scratch Fever" days.) As the story goes, this concert (5/9/79) was the last date on a three-month European tour, not to mention the third show Nuge and his three-piece backing band had played that night. Performed in front of a rabid crowd, tunes like "Motor City Madhouse" and "Stranglehold" have that wild, heavy crunch in them that Nugent never fully captured in the sterile recording-studio environment. Nuge's raw guitar-hero runs are executed with just enough taste to stay out of that masturbatory gee-tar noodling category. Some of you are probably thinking, "Ted Nugent! That gun toting, right wing, cro-mag! Forget it!" Well, you're missing out. Yeah, the music's a bit cock-rockish, and the lyrics border, at times, on misogynistic, but this is rock 'n' roll. It's supposed to be raunched out and dirty, not all nice and introspective. While the Nuge has definitely made a comment or two that's made me shake my head in disbelief, I'm still able to separate the individual from the art and enjoy his music. Now if you'll excuse me, I've got some air-guitaring to attend to. Wango, man!

Currently listening to: Trailer Bride, *Hope Is A Thing With Feathers*; Dollar Store, *S/T* (reviewed this issue); Lamb Of God, *As The Palaces Burn*; Jucifer, *I Name You Destroyer*; Steve Earle, *Shut Up And Die Like An Aviator* (live).



Scurvy Dogs – It's All Gonna End, 12"

Bands who model themselves after mid-'90s 'core should have the passion of this metal noodling hardcore. The drums are a big mess in a good way, while the bass follows the guitar step for step. A large chunk of my record collection sounds like this, and Scurvy Dogs will fit right in. (EA)

Inspired by Angst Records, 775 Post St., #2-A, San Francisco, CA 94109, inspiredbyangst@hotmail.com

Scraps And Heart Attacks – Still Sick, CD

Here's another NYHC band from Long Island that has some chug-chug to them, but not as much as Most Precious Blood. That's not an insult because this record has more than enough energy to get even the most passive crowd dancing and tearing up a storm. (DI)

Triple Crown Records, 331 W. 57th St., PMB 472, New York, NY 10019, www.triplecrownrecords.com

Second Chance NL – Tides May Turn, CD

A supposedly long-anticipated record of hardcore punk rock from the Netherlands. Fourteen songs pushed along with hopped-up drumming and sandy-throated vocals about not caring for anything. It makes me wonder who's doing all the anticipating these days. (SM)

Gangstyle Records, 6125 AW Obicht, the Netherlands, www.gangstylerecords.com

Seekonk – For Barbara Lee, CDEP

This weepy rock album incorporates atmospheric, instrumental noise with pretty female vocals. The song "Hate The Sun" stands out from the remaining tracks with its spooky tone, vocal whisperings and interesting percussive elements. It is definitely suitable as background music for the narcissistic and lovelorn. (AJA)

Kimchee Records, 6 Sagamore Rd., Ipswich MA 01938, www.kimcheerecords.com

Selfmademan – The Daylight Robbery, CD

Well-done emotional and melodic hardcore punk out of Canada, very much reminiscent of Hot Water Music, Jawbreaker and Small Brown Bike. (MG)

Small Man Records, PO Box 352, RPO Corydon Ave., Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3M 3V3, Canada, www.smallmanrecords.com

Setup, The – Tuned In To Drop Dead, CD

To sum up The Setup: pummeling. Modern hardcore done up right, without the clichéd conventions of wussy sung parts, mosh breakdowns or back-and-forth quiet/loud parts. But they still find a way to make it dynamic and refreshing. The music is a crushing blend of hardcore and metal that barely lets up from song to song, yet each time it still sounds fresh. Lyrically, they're all over the place from hopelessness to hopelessness to drinking away that hopelessness. Some Prozac might cheer them up, but you saw what Gleemonex did to Bruce McCulloch's band in *Brain Candy*. Despair fits these guys like a pair of Jack Tripper's shorts, and I wouldn't have it any other way. Oh, and there's a ripping Sepultura cover to close things out too. (NS)

Action Driver, PO Box 610, Toledo, OH 43697, www.actiondriver.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Tim Kuehl (TK)

Dead Moon, Nervous Sooner Changes. To me, Dead Moon was one of those bands that people kept telling me were amazing, and I just shrugged it off. Then a friend dragged along to a show on Halloween, and it became clear why there was so much hype. Dead Moon has been around since 1988, consisting of Fred Cole, his wife and bassist Toody and drummer Andrew Loomis. They play some of the most original, dark, lo-fi garage/punk ever, and they are still doing it at least a few times a month here in Portland. At the beginning of each show, they light a candle in a Jack Daniel's bottle and, theoretically, when the candle burns out, the show is over. The strength of their stage presence is something every fan of rock 'n' roll should witness. *Nervous Sooner Changes* came out in 1994, and my favorite tracks are "Running Out Of Time," "Can't Let Go" and the amazing ballad "Windows Of Time". It was hard to choose which album to pick for this review, because there are so many great songs on all of them. Cole has been releasing records since 1964 and has been in bands such as the Weeds, Lollipop Shoppe and The Rats. This guy is older than my dad. With Dead Moon still playing, even with mainstream's attempt at choking it off with garbage, rock 'n' roll will live on. Don't be like me and just shrug them off. Give in and take a listen.

Now listening to: Antioch Arrow, *Gems Of Masochism*; Against Me!, *As The Eternal Cowboy*; Wire, *Pink Flag*; The Mighty Thor, *Unchained*.

Scurvy Dogs / the Sound of Failure

Shedd, Tracy – Red, CD

Pleasant cocktail pop mixed with coffeehouse rock. Picture jazzy beats and cool, distortion-free guitar parts with tuneful female vocals. Most songs seem to deal with love and relationships, but the lyrics have an appealing take on things. Good for rainy days and heartaches. (NS)

Teen Beat, PO Box 3265, Arlington, VA 22203, www.teenbeatrecords.com

Shiner Massive – S/T, CD

Weird rap/rock along the lines of RATM, Urban Dance Squad or Kid Rock. Most of the music is guitar-driven with a strong Hendrix influence. The vocals are more B-boy style than blingin'. And there's a rap "interpretation" of Bad Brain's "Re-Ignition." They have more to say than most current rap, but the rock style sounds a bit odd these days. (NS)

Slash, www.slashbigmassive.com

Skeleton Coast – Write It Down, Burn It Up, CD

Write It Down, Burn It Up's best moments come when their vocalists relax and sing instead of yell. Too often the set leans on noise and speed over care and craft, making for lazy, narrow-minded songs. Still, though, with a bit of polish, Skeleton Coast could pass for an indie-rock regular. (BF)

Self-released, PO Box 3444, Portland, OR 97208-3444, www.skeletoncoast.net

Skulls, The – The Golden Age Of Piracy, CD

Punk pioneers The Skulls have been a force since 1977. Their, their second "comeback" disc, is damn good. They continue the simple anthem formula with a sneer and a growl. You will sing along the first time. Along with the Buzzcocks, The Skulls are actually still creating great music. (EA)

Dr. Strange Records, PO Box 1058, Alta Loma, CA 91701, www.drstrange.com

Sleepytime Gorilla Museum, The – Live, CD

With tracks culled from more than 10 performances, this album showcases the extreme weirdness of the Museum in their most primal setting: experimental noise collages played live with found and homemade instruments; sparse, minimal pieces under creepy layered vocals; whimsical folksy oddities; hilarious stage banter and much more. (MG)

Sickroom Records, Ltd., PO Box 47830, Chicago, IL 60647, www.sickroomrecords.com

A Small Victory – The Pieces We Keep, CDEP

This EP is picture perfect! How's that promo bite for the upcoming record's press release? "Perfect" if you're a fan of the legions of cutesy pop-emo bands taking over adolescent hearts everywhere. I've never heard anything so wholesomely generic in an already diluted and boring genre! Amazing! (VC)

Lobster Records, PO Box 14731, Santa Barbara, CA 93102 www.lobsterrecords.com

The Snake The Cross The Crown – Like A Moth Before The Flame, CDEP

This six-song disc has layers of whirlwind guitars, much like MTV emo-pop-rock bands. I felt like this disc was manufactured to induce pain. Sonically speaking, this production is top notch. Fans of said sound will probably eat this up and anticipate the next release. (EA)

Waste of Time Records, PO Box 16, Monee, IL 60449, www.wasteoftimerecords.net

Snapcase – Bright Flashes, CD

Three remixes, five leftovers from *End Transmission* and four covers (Devo, Helmet and Jane's Addiction) from this monumental band. Of the earlier Victory Records bands, Snapcase and Deadguy were some of the best in a sea of pseudo-tough-guy bullshit hardcore bands. Here we are about 10 years later, and *Bright Flashes* isn't even really an album, so to speak, but a way to get more recorded material to fans, I guess. 1997's *Progression Through Unlearning* was their landmark record, and I fear that Snapcase set the bar too high for themselves. With 2000's *Designs For Automation*, people seemed to care a whole lot less, if at all. *End Transmission* was but a blip on my personal hardcore radar. Snapcase has always been a band that you need to listen to with a clean palate every single time: never bad, just forever changing their approach to melodic and intense hardcore. Let's hope that this collection of songs isn't screaming "contract obligation," and we can look forward to another solid record in the near future. Die-hards only for this one. (DH)

Victory Records, 346 North Justine St., Suite 504, Chicago, IL 60607, www.victoryrecords.com

Snatches Of Pink – Hyena, CD

If their name has you expecting cock rock, you're right. Midpaced rock in the vein of Buckcherry, Sponge, maybe Black Crowes. It can be catchy, but it's too caught up in being "rock." The penultimate track is an acoustic ballad, of course. (KR)

MoRisen Records, 1409 East Blvd., Ste. 116, Charlotte NC 28203, www.morisen.com

Snoozer – Winter Stops All Sound, CDEP

Snoozer is one lady playing guitar and keyboards and utilizing overdubbed layers of vocals to create a fabulous collection of adorable, poignant, sugary pop songs. This is a great addition to the solo, lo-fi indie-pop repertoire. (MG)

Happy Happy Birthday To Me Records, PO Box 1035, Panama City, FL 32402, www.hbbtm.com

Soiled Doves – Soiled Life, CD

It's so annoying to discover a band you like, only to learn they have already broken up. Headed by Johnny Whitney, vocalist of the Blood Brothers, Soiled Doves play angular and dark music, eventually breaking into a hook or two in each song. Some of their songs can be a little long, but they always seem to have a hook eventually—they just make you wait for it in anticipation. The Soiled Doves started out being a new wave band and changed their name in 2001 from The Vogue. Three members are also in the Chromatics. If you can't ever see them play again, at least this CD exists to document the rock. (TK)

GSL, PO Box 65091, Los Angeles, CA 90065, www.goldstandardlabs.com

Sound Of Failure, The – The Party Is Over, CD

Damn, this rocks! There are aspects of '80s hardcore, metal and thrash all over this band. It would be hard to make a decent band comparison, but I would have to say I could hear elements of some Gravity Records bands like Heroin. This is a very well-played album and worth picking up. (TK)

Cheap Art Records, PO Box 2101, Philadelphia, PA 19103, www.cheap-art.com

A Spark of Life - Promises Made. Promises Kept., CD

Lots of 1990s Revelation sounds on here, back when hardcore bands bordered the mainstream appeal of "groovy metal." Too bad Quick-sand was as far as anyone got. ASOL hails from SoCal, so there's obligatory pop-punk breaks, which prevent them from going full-throttle. Guys, drop the cheese and up the beast! (VC)

Lorelei Records, PO Box 902, Santa Cruz, CA 95061, www.loreleirecords.com

Sparrowhawk - S/T, CD

"A kid with some songs about 'relationships'" as the liner notes say, would usually make me want to hurt someone, but Sparrowhawk ain't half bad. Simple guitars and heartfelt lyrics. (JG)

Hand Records, PO Box 1424, Arlington, MA 02474-0022, www.handrecords.com.

Speaking In Capitals - Clever Subject Line / There's A Pattern, 7"

A great new band out of Edinburgh, Scotland, who offer two gems of guitar-driven indie rock goodness. Not too poppy, not too sparse—just to-the-point, sprawling cheerfulness. Influences include Modest Mouse, Neutral Milk Hotel and Bright Eyes. (MG)

Agony Acres Records, 123/4 Canongate, Edinburgh, EH8 8BP, Scotland, UK, www.agonyacres.co.uk

Speeddealer - Burned Alive, CD

Speeddealer takes the heavy-metal Motorhead and Black Sabbath and combines it with hardcore punk's tempo. Although they are in the same vein as Zeke, they have their own sound. The live tracks on this disc are especially good and make this worth owning. (JG)

Radical Records, 77 Bleeker St. #C2-21, New York, NY 10012, www.radicalrecords.com

Spinto Band, The - S/T, 7"

The Spinto Band (which might have been named after my ex-room-mate Sam Pinto) release four songs of indie-pop goodness. Check this out, especially fans of The Crabs, Nothing Painted Blue and all those Elephant 6 bands. (JG)

Sleepglue Records, PO Box 5512, Syracuse, NY 13220, www.sleepglue.com

SpoilSport - They All Want Cake, CD

Boston's SpoilSport uncorks its boy-girl punk rock with the irreverence of the Ramones and the cavalier of a Chuck E. Cheese ball-pit. On *They All Want Cake*, the quartet races through 14 speedy rockers with a low-fi intensity and hand-clapping catchiness. The co-eds team chordy guitars with a frantic rhythm section and vocals by all four members. The result is sometimes gruff and raw, other times candied and gentle, but always harmonized and poppy. There is a bubbly spirit exploding from these songs, as SpoilSport plays them fast, loud and sweet. On the endlessly fun "Just Dance," the foursome commands in their wonderful back-and-forth "C'mon baby let the music find you/ Just dance/ C'mon baby leave the world behind you/ Just dance/ And if you lose control/ Well, there's nothing wrong with that/ So just dance." *They All Want Cake* is a triumphant debut, jumping with energy and bliss—and spoiling nothing. (BF)

Self-released, 7 Weld Hill St., #2R, Jamaica Plain, MA 02130, www.spoilsport.net

Reviewer Spotlight: Krystle Miller (KM)

Bjork, Debut. I must admit I spend a lot of my time listening to scream-filled, aggressive music. I can listen to nothing but metal and hardcore for days on end, but as much as I love my His Hero Is Gone and Swing Kids records, sometimes there's nothing more satisfying than relaxing to the soothing electronic sounds of Bjork. This album had a couple popular singles out during the early '90s, but after the mainstream forgot about Bjork, a lot of people continued to listen to her albums. She almost has a cult following—Bjork fans *love* Bjork. While a lot of electronic music is plagued with an unemotional coldness, Bjork's is full of heart. Her vocal style is certainly her own, and she can go from quiet whispers to full on shouts with the same intensity and passion. I generally don't enjoy electronic music, but even without Bjork's vocals the beats and music on this record are catchy and downright beautiful. The two tracks that received a little commercial success in the early '90s ("Human Behavior," "Venus As A Boy") are undoubtedly the best tracks on the album and worth a listen if you get the chance. The five or six records Bjork has released since *Debut* are just as amazing and included in many a "Best of the '90s" lists, but this first record serves as a good introduction to those who might not be hip to the genius that is Bjork.

Currently playing: Yage, *Anders Leben!?*; Lack, *Blues Moderne: Danois Explosifs*; La Quiete / Acrimonie, split 7"; Between The Buried And Me, *The Silent Circus*; Pretty Girls Make Graves, *The New Romance*.

SSION - Opportunity Bless My Soul, CD

Noisy SSION take a Pussy Galore approach to their music. Take any new band on In The Red Records, crank up the keyboards and machines, and you'll get this sound. The lyrics are dumb but infectious. I appreciate the nods to the Minutemen in the first track's title "What Makes a Man Start a Band?" and the title to their first release, *I Don't Want New Wave And I Don't Want The Truth*. (EA)

Version City Records, PO Box 22183 Brooklyn, NY 11201, www.versioncityrecords.com

Statistics - Leave Your Name, CD

Denver Dailey's (Desaparecidos) solo project's first full-length has 11 songs and is over in less than half an hour. Just like the EP he released in 2003, this finishes too quickly. This feels less new wave to me than the EP did; *Leave Your Name's* synth post-punk sounds like a less funky D-Plan or less quirky, more rockin' Milemarker. The mood of the record varies, though: It rocks out ("Sing A Song"), but also has subdued, more atmospheric moments as well ("The Grass Is Always Greener"). Track four, "Mr. Nathan," is a really catchy, poppy instrumental. All the songs have a strong synth presence, but this doesn't have the trendy, ironic vibe of electroclash and its bands du jour. In fact, Dailey seems totally sincere in tracks like "Hours Seemed Like Days," which laments some of technology's efficiency: "It used to be that hours seemed like days/ let's go back in time/ it used to be that hours seemed like days/ let's just press rewind." After listening to this CD, you'll be doing that over and over again. (KR)

Jade Tree Records, 2310 Kennwyn Road, Wilmington DE 19810, www.jadetree.com

STFU / Monster Squad - split, CD

Two angry postcard-punk bands duke it out for studded jacket supremacy. Everybody loses. It's not bad, just boring. (RR)

Burnt Ramen Records, 104 21st, Richmond, CA 94801, www.burntramem.com; Rodent Popsicle Records, PO Box 1143, Allston, MA 02134, www.rodentpopsicle.com

Still Life - The Incredible Sinking Feeling..., CD

How about some tedious, plodding, meandering emo? The quiet parts are boring and not pretty enough, the loud parts aren't powerful enough, and the lyrics read like bad high school poetry. Welcome to Yawn Town. (JC)

Grey Day Productions, PO Box 2086, Portland, OR 97208, www.greydayproductions.com

Stylex - Auto Focus, CD

Grinding basslines and dancey drum beats fronted by snotty boy vox give Stylex its own place in electro-punk, but they're still a long way from matching their Ohio forerunners Devo or Braniac. (EG)

Action Driver, PO Box 610, Toledo, OH 43697, www.actiondriver.com

Suffering And The Hideous Thieves - All My Friends Are On Prozac, CDEP

Strange splices of synthesizer, piano and samples create the sinister tone of these four tracks. S.A.T.H.T lays schizophrenic buzzing hums in one ear while breaks of sliding electric guitar dive into the other. What's so striking is that it still sounds organic, even playful, in its lyrical cynicism and depression. (CC)

Self-released, www.hideousthieves.com

Supernova - Under A Dying Sun, CD

This album started off well, with punchy drums and guitar, but the singer's vocals quickly turned it into a whiney dirgefest. There's a lot of noodling around too, which seemed a little too much for me. Will this be the next "screamo" band on MTV? (JG)

Substandard Records, PO Box 310, Berkeley, CA 94701, www.substandard.com

Sunshine - Necromance, CDEP

This Czech trio, on Mars Volta's Gold Standard Laboratories, shows that they've been doing some of the same calisthenics as their mates. They stretch out their legs with jittery guitar and Moog exercises. Lead singer Kay's vocals are marked by a nerdish Devo aftertaste that works surprisingly well. After just two songs, this band has established a realm where there are rules and policies. None of their songs strays beyond the existing limits, choosing instead to operate solely in the safety of their own backyard. It could be seen as a knock if they didn't have such an expansive backyard. Never going outside themselves, Sunshine has established its parameters and works well with the self-imposed limitations. (SM)

Gold Standard Laboratories, PO Box 85091, Los Angeles, CA 90065, www.goldstandardlabs.com

Talk, The - No, You Shut Up!, CD

No-frills melodic rock with a little punk and alt-rock influence. The melodies have a '60s feel to them, but it's not overbearing. Most of the songs are under two minutes, which seems about right for this style. Pretty catchy and enjoyable, but it won't change your life or anything. (KM)

Morisen Records, 1409 E. Blvd., Suite 213, Charlotte, NC 28203, www.morisen.com

Teenage Harlots - Some Kinda Girl, 7"

Punk rock with a garage twist, these short-and-quick songs take cues from a basic punk structure but add a nice, dirty-bluesy feel. Hip shaking, booze soaked punk 'n' roll with the occasional fabulous guitar line. (MG)

Dead Girl Records, www.deadgirlrecords.bravehost.com

Tenki - View Of An Orbiting Man, CD

Tenki is the new project by Jamie Toal from mid-'90s poorly named alterna-band Tripmaster Monkey. Tenki sounds as if Franklin Bruno has graduated from indie-pop to manhood: a bit Built To Spill, a bit Dinosaur Jr. *View Of An Orbiting Man* is 10 tracks' worth of diverse pop offerings, coyly penned and well-played. (JG)

Future Apple Tree Records, PO Box 191, Davenport, IA 52805, www.futureappletree.com

Terminus - Graveyard Of Dreams, CD

A compilation of songs from 1986 to 1996. Thumbs up for a long-lasting band sticking to one solid sound: This is 15 tracks of timeless, polished melodic punk in the vein of late Naked Raygun with a UK-punk twist. (MG)

Boss Tuneage, PO Box 74, Sandy, Bedfordshire, SG19 2WB, UK, www.bosstuneage.com

There Were Wires - Sornambulists, CDEP

This band plays intense and churning doom-core (reference points: Isis and Neurosis). Their long, intelligently orchestrated and sprawling songs stretch through time with a level of ferocity that's difficult to comprehend. Fuck yeah. (MG)

Iodine Recordings, 1085 Commonwealth Ave PMB 318, Boston, MA 02215 iodinerecordings.com



They Walk Among Us / TVH

They Walk Among Us – Mathematics, Art In Progress, CD

An album of pop-rock songs that aren't all that invigorating, but have some interesting production elements and harmonies. There are also some spacey synth elements to go along with the Welshmen's otherworldly lyrical content. Produced by the Super Furry Animals' Richard Jackson. (AJA) Aeronaut Records, PO Box 361432, Los Angeles, CA 90036, www.aeronautrecords.com

Think I Care – S/T, CD

I thought DYS had gotten back together. Holy shit! This sounds like a real blast from the past, but just recorded better with more musical ability. I found myself shouting at the CD player saying "Play 'Wolfpack'! Play 'Girls Got Limits'!" If you need hXc that tough, check this out. (DM) Deadalive, PO Box 42593 Philadelphia, PA 19101, www.deadalive.com

30 Years War – Under The Gun, CDEP

Sometimes screaming over every track doesn't convey your sincerity or heartfelt dedication to whatever mumbo-jumbo you're spewing. It just makes you sound like a kid with A.D.D., especially if the band is playing like shit behind you. Just a thought. (AJ) Substandard Records, PO Box 310, Berkeley, CA 94701, www.substandard.com

Thrall – Lifer, CD

Experimental, groove-heavy, post-something heavy metal that's somehow less interesting in practice than theory. (RR) Alternative Tentacles Records, PO Box 419092, San Francisco, CA 94141-0992, www.alternativetentacles.com

Thunderbirds Are Now! – Doctor, Lawyer, Indian Chief, CD

This fast post-punk is in the vein of the Yeah Yeah Yeahs and is much quicker and crazier than most similar bands. The synth and bass take precedence over the guitars, vocals and drums. Highly danceable and entertaining, these Thunderbirds really are now! (AE) Action Driver, PO Box 610, Toledo, OH 43697, www.actiondriver.com

Tielli, Martin – Operation Infinite Joy, CD

Odd tunes with a retro storytelling appeal to them, sort of like if Tena-cious D was a Bowie tribute band during the Ziggy Stardust era. I guess Canadians love him. This is disc one in a four-disc series. (DM) Six Shooter Records, PO Box 98038, 970 Queen St. East, Toronto, ON, M4M 1J0, Canada, www.sixshooterrecords.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Sean Moeller (SM)

The Waxwings, Low To The Ground. You've got to be very careful when you walk into a record store that you traffic quite often because of your...sickness. You're there so much that everyone who works there knows your name and you know theirs. They think they know what you like and, more importantly—for them—they know you're all too willing to unfold a wallet at the end of a visit. I waste my money on enough uninformed impulse buys that I don't need to add records by The Clientele or The Witch Hazel Sound to my collection just because my local supplier tells me he's really into this "great new pop band." The reason I do still cave to his pitches is because of The Waxwings. This Michigan band's debut record has no vacancy for another harmony. Maybe that's not your thing, but it's mine. Hearing people my age making songs as miraculous and inspiring as Brian Wilson or John Sebastian did long before I was born is why I'd drive six hours one-way to see a band play a 45-minute set, hop back in the car and drive right back home. The Waxwings were my first genuine indication that music that makes me drool is not just a fancy from the past, but stuff of the now as well. If my friends and esteemed record-store clerks could always give me recommendations like this, I'd lose my ability to hesitate.

Currently holding my attention: John Vanderslice, *Cellar Door*; Vicious Vicious, *Blood & Clover* (reviewed this issue); The Bronx, *S/T*; Gray Home Music, *Songs Of The Past, Songs Of The Future*; The Marlboro Chorus, *Entangled*; The Who, *Who's Next*; Maritime, *Adios*.

Reviewer Spotlight: (Mr) Dana Morse (DM)

SNFU, If You Swear, You'll Catch No Fish. Even though this came out in 1986, it remains fresh. This piece of punk-rock history is not only amazing skate rock, but it also help put Canada on the punk-rock map. Besides fast driving tunes, the song structures were amazing and were only matched by their wit. I don't usually like goofy lyrics, but their songs in general would paint a story with an awesome soundtrack: Alzheimer's Disease ("I Forget") or parent groups vs. "devil" music ("The Devil's Voice"). They didn't really make light of topics, but really gave it a humorous twist. Sure these guys did have their silly moments ("He's Not Getting Older, He's Getting Bitter"), but the music was so good it didn't matter. Each tune was chock full of metal guitar riffs and breakdowns without being metal in the slightest. Mr. Chi Pig's vocals were also so distinguishable in comparison to their peers and added another likeable quality to this band. After three great records and a break up, SNFU reformed during the punk boom of the '90s. Signing to Epitaph and then Alternative Tentacles, they were only a shadow of what they once were. It kind of ruined the memory of their band, but for those who know, *No Fish* as well as *...And No One Else Wanted To Play* and *Better Than A Stick In The Eye* were the shit back in the day and still are.

Check this out: The Ends (reviewed this issue); Dead Low Tide; Madlib, *Shades Of Blue*; Maserati, *Language Of Cities*; Bear vs. Shark; Buck 65, *Talkin' Honkey Blues*; and Nick Hornby's *Songbook*.

Tiny Hairs – Coldless, CD

The prospect of meeting the players of Tiny Hairs is intriguing. I'd ask, "What was going through your collective minds as you improvised these beautiful noises?" Everything from radio transmissions and creepy-crawly bugs to droning chord progressions and what sounds like a typewriter during a thunderstorm made the cut. (EG) False Walls, PO Box 146788, Chicago, IL 60614, fwalls@xsite.net

Tora! Tora! Torrance! / Swing By Seven – split, 7"

TTT! improve their sound from 2001's atrocious *Get Into It*, shifting from nu-garage to the early post-punk revival. I'm skeptical of such trendiness. Swing By Seven play two great, frantic rockers reminiscent of when San Diego Gravity bands stopped throwing tantrums and added that accessible swing to their sound. (VC) Init Records, PO Box 3432, Mankato, MN 56002, www.initrecords.com

Total Shutdown – The Album, CD

San Francisco is responsible for this noise core ensemble. Screaming, pounding instruments and saxophone. People dig these guys, but I don't feel it. You want to know what else is good for a headache? Drinking the night before. (DM) Tigerbeat6, PO Box 460922 San Francisco, CA 94146-0922, www.tigerbeat6.com

Totimoshi – Monoli, CD

A rough tumble of metal and hard rock with gravelly, grinding male vocals. The music consists of typical dark rockster stuff: well-paced bass, dramatic guitars and a completely deathly desert feel. Not enough unpredictability to keep me interested, but it's a safe bet if you're drawn to dark metal/rock. (SP) This Dark Reign Recordings, PO Box 30666, Long Beach, CA 90853, www.devildollrecords.com

Tragedy / Totalitar – split, 7"

Two burning tracks from the reigning kings of political hardcore, Tragedy, who play a wicked style of dark, chunky hardcore. Totalitar have a similar style, but slightly faster and gruffer. They give us two songs that are reworks from their 1996 demo. (MG) Armageddon Label, PO Box 56, Providence, RI 02901, www.armageddonshop.com

Trailer Bride – Hope Is A Thing With Feathers, CD

Trailer Bride's creepy mix of blues, country and rockabilly has always been way cool. Their four previous albums all had their moments of real genius, but fell just a little short of being full-fledged classics in my book. With *Hope Is A Thing With Feathers*,

Trailer Bride have finally crafted a classic album. First off, vocalist/guitarist Melissa Swingle has stepped up her songwriting. Her sorrowful moan floats wearily over the music, telling tales of dead-beat lovers, homesick travelers and demented daughters of the South. This lady has the blues as bad as Patsy Cline or Billie Holiday ever did. Check out "Vagabond Motel" or "Mockingbird" for further proof. Second, with the addition of drummer John Bowman and lead guitarist Tim Barnes, the musical arrangements have become much more compelling. Barnes is a soulful player whose fingers ooze passion, especially on "Lightning" (possibly the album's best track). Rock-steady bassist Daryl White has finally found the Chong to his Cheech in Bowman, a hard-hitting drummer who drives the tunes home with the snap of his backbeat. It doesn't get much better than this, folks. I hope you don't sleep on this album. (AJ) Bloodshot Records, 3039 W. Irving Park Road, Chicago, IL 60618, www.bloodshotrecords.com

Triple Whip – Slapshot, CD

It's refreshing to hear driving basslines and incessant drums overwhelm guitars now and then, especially if the band can pull it off. Champaign, Ill.-based Triple Whip is that band: drum and bass upfront, discordant/jazzy guitar with speak/sing/shouting B-movie-inspired lyrics. (EG) Innocent Words, PO Box 674, Danville, IL 61834, www.innocentwords.com

Tristeza – Espuma, CD

This mysterious little album features instrumental atmospheric rock songs that are previously unreleased or recorded live (including "This Trap," the first song recorded without guitarist Jimmy LaValle). The dynamic songs are complete have infectious rhythms and a sort-of unfinished quality that make them endearing. Relaxing and energizing at the same time. (AJA) Gravity Records, PO Box 81332, San Diego CA 92138, www.gravityrec.com

Truxton – S/T, CD

I like the music on this one very much: poppy rock with catchy bass lines and guitar leads. The vocals kind of throw me off because the guy has such a high voice, but it's not a bad thing. The vocal melodies are awesome as well and bring the songs together. (KM) Substandard Records, PO Box 310 Berkeley, CA 94701, www.substandard.com

TVH – Night Raid On Lisbon Street, CD

I'll be cutting my own throat on this one. I was never a huge fan of Crime. So, having received TVH, featuring former frontman of Crime,

I didn't have many expectations, and they were met. If you dig Crime, check this one out. The playing sounds dated, as if recorded back in the day. Oh well. (DM)

Flapping Jet Records, 3639 Midway Dr. #271 San Diego, CA 92110, www.flappingjet.com

Tyrades - S/T, CD

The Tyrades are probably one of the finest true r'n'r bands that have popped out from the mediocre scene within the past year or two. Seriously, buy these folks a round of shots and a case of Pabst for blessing the frazzled underground rock 'n' roll scene with their bad-ass selves. Their insanely frenetic and art-tinged style of punk rock is truly unlike anything else: fast, furious, strange and addictive, only taking influences from the best while twisting everything into their own explosive and unique sound. Definitely one of the best records of the year. Even though I can't sing the praises of this record enough, it still pales in comparison to their explosive live show. (MG)

Broken Rekids, PO Box 460462, San Francisco, CA 94146, www.brokenrekids.com

Undertones, The - Get What You Need, CD

Yes, this is *the* comeback album you've been waiting for from one of progenitors of punk rock, Ireland's The Undertones. They broke up in 1983, but they're back with a classy, old-fashioned, '77-style 13-song full-length of new anthems. It doesn't disappoint and will make them legions of new fans. (AE)

Sanctuary Records / self-released, www.theundertones.com

Up Up Down Down Left Right Left Right B A Start - Perris, CA, CDEP

Considering all the crap that comes out my hometown (Philadelphia), it's amazing how good Up Up Down Down are: a bit Braid, a bit Promise Ring (before they sucked). Their five-song sophomore release is rife with charging guitars and sharp melodic crescendos. Five songs are not enough. (JG)

Limekiln Records, PO Box 4064, Philadelphia, PA 19118, www.limekilnrecords.com

USAISAMONSTER, The - Tasheyana Compost, CD

Two-piece bands can be tricky—not everyone can be the White Stripes or Lightning Bolt. These guys travel the spectrum from quiet to pounding, from rock to noise, to marching to stampeding with vocals to match. They hit more often than miss and are for the art punk in everyone. (DM)

Load Records, PO Box 35 Providence, RI 02901, www.loadrecords.com

USS Horsewhip - Vs. The Kids, CDEP

Whoa, it's furious twin guitar rock action in mad punk-rock style. Instantly familiar, but it doesn't immediately remind me of any other bands. After a couple listens I thought of the Riverboat Gamblers, if that means anything to ya. USS Horsewhip: one. The Kids: zip. (JC)

Brass Rocket Recording Conglomerate, PO Box 5791, Bellingham, WA 98277

Veal - The Embattled Hearts, CD

Is it a big-time rock record with bent leanings, or a cleaned up weirdo record? Results are inconclusive. The production's big without being overly glossy, and the music's sort of radio rock by way of Western guitar twang. Yeah, I'm confused too, but confusion's not inherently bad. (RR)

Six Shooter Records, PO Box 98038, 970 Queen Street East, Toronto ON, M4M 1J0, www.sixshooterrecords.com

Vexers, The - Gangland Ballads & The Death Sex Set, CDEP

A great EP following their awesome debut full-length, The Vexers continuously mold their sound into an explosion of solid, rhythmic, art-damaged punk, led by Jennifer Taylor's exquisitely teasing vocals. The post-punk sound of the early 1980s is captured with a twist that even bands like the Liars can't pull off. (MG)

Ace Fu Records, PO Box 552, New York, NY 10009, www.acefu.com

Reruns: new reissues from punk's past.

Antioch Arrow, CD

Glammy goth-rock performed by lip-sticked, glittery boys with attitudes. Not so much singing as punky rapping and droning in anguish. Pianos, a crashing bass and definitive endings. Sometimes the vocals get a little too breathy in a pretentious '80s way. A bit Marilyn Manson-ish, but that gets drowned with elegant and collapsing melodies. (SP)

Three.One.G, PO Box 178262, San Diego, CA 92177, www.threeneeg.com

Art Attacks, The - Outrage & Horror, CD

Overground reissue of '77 British punk rockers' recorded material, unreleased songs and a live show from the Vortex in 1978. A booklet with an interview with Edwin Pouncey and Steve Spear by Stewart Home is included. (AJA)

Overground Records, PO Box 1NW, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE99 1NW UK, www.overgroundrecords.co.uk

Ben Grim - Retro, CD

In 10 years, there are going to be tons of reissues of solid, overlooked '90s bands like this much welcomed discography of a relatively unknown band from Wisconsin. Boris The Sprinkler fans will especially enjoy the spirited Zero Boys cover that Rev. Norb joins in on. (AE)

Boss Tuneage, PO Box 74, Sandy, Beds, SG19 2WB, UK, www.bosstuneage.com

Cavity - Supercollider, CD

A rerelease of their hard-to-find Man's Ruin full-length. Things I enjoy include groove-oriented riffs, yelled vocals and crushing heaviness. Therefore, I enjoy Cavity. Get this and help round out the "smoking section" of your CD collection. (DH)

Hydra Head Records, PO Box 291430, Los Angeles, CA 90029, www.hydrahead.com

Fifteen - Extra Medium Kick Ball Star (17), CD

Reissue of the (I'm told) classic Fifteen album. You've probably already bought this if you're a fan, but for those who don't know, Fifteen play super-political pop punk with off-key vocals and a little folk influence. (KM)

Sub City, PO Box 7495, Van Nuys, CA 91409, www.subcity.net

Fifteen Minutes Fast - Remedial Math Rock, CD

This reissue of a Fifteen Minutes Fast's power-pop full-length has the funniest title in ages. They use keyboards and dual male/female vocals well, and for a band as hip as they are, they don't come off as overly trendy. (AE)

Search and Rescue Records, PO Box 8260, Ann Arbor, MI 48107, www.searchandrescuerecords.com

* Gits, The - Enter: The Conquering Chicken, CD

Despite the short gap between The Gits' debut and this second album, *Enter: The Conquering Chicken* was a marked step forward in the band's bluesy, street-punk style. Tracks like "Precious Blood," with its tempo changes and

dark melodic breaks that parallel Mia Zapata's world-weary lyrics, show effortless intricacy. Producer Jack Endino's remixes of the original tracks re-energize the songs, putting Zapata's raspy roar at the helm and clearing the clutter for Steve Moriarty and Matt Dresdner's powerhouse rhythm section and Joe Spleen's ingenious guitar lines. Long-time fans will appreciate the nine bonus songs, including two previously unreleased studio tracks ("I'm Lou" and "New Fast One"). The original recording and the future of the band was cut short in 1993 when Mia Zapata was murdered, but the addition of seven live tracks to this reissue gives the thousands of fans who never saw the band live a taste of the fierce intensity that makes The Gits, rightfully, legendary. (CC)

Broken Rekids, PO Box 460402, San Francisco, CA 94146, www.brokenrekids.com

Reagan National Crash Diet - Sucktastick!, CDEP

The much-needed CD reissue of the already classic double 7" from this wacky, sloppy Chicago-area band with dual male/female vocals. It sounds like what a Plan-It-X band doing garage rock would sound like: totally wild. Includes three bonus tracks, two of which were recorded live at the Fireside Bowl. (AE)

Roostercrow Records, 1658 N. Milwaukee Ave., #545, Chicago, IL 60647, www.roostercrow.com

Ringworm - The Promise, CD

A sweet rerelease of Ringworm's 1993 debut full-length and demo. They play some heavy metal/aggressive hardcore with plenty of Cookie Monster vocals. The lyrics are dark and cynical. How could they not be, as they're sung by a guy called the "Human Furnace." This is way better than their new stuff on Victory. (TK)

Deathwish Inc., 10 Lathrop Street, Beverly MA 01915, www.deathwishinc.com

Stereo Total - Monokini, CD

A rerelease of Stereo Total's 1997 LP on Bungalow Records, it includes songs released on several of the band's later albums, including "LA, CA, USA" and "Ach Auch Lieblich," as well as several previously unreleased tracks. For the consummate fan. (JG)

Kill Rock Stars, 120 NE State Ave., Olympia, WA 98501, www.killrockstars.com

Stereo Total - Oh Ah, CD

Hipster rock sung in French, German and English, originally released in '95. Some of it rocks, but most of it sounds silly. They do "bad" covers of "Push It" and "Get Down Tonight." It's kind of garage-ish with a bit of electro pop thrown in. I'd rather hear Le Tigre. (AJ)

Kill Rock Stars, 120 State Ave., Olympia, WA 98501, www.killrockstars.com

Sticks & Stones - The Strife And Times, 2xCD

Sticks & Stones were incredible, and this essential collection of 41 songs is a great introduction to this band that's already being forgotten. A staple of the early '90s East Coast punk scene, they played diverse punk that borrowed from every sub-genre imaginable, while remaining primarily fast and melodic. (AE)

Chunksaah Records, PO Box 974, New Brunswick, NJ 08903, www.chunksaah.com

Those Unknown - S/T, CD

Pretty typical release for TKO records. Those Unknown play an older, simpler style of punk with a little poppiness to it and no more than four chords for each song. It's a reissue from 1995, but sounds like it was recorded in the late '80s. (KM)

TKO Records, 3126 W. Cary St. #303, Richmond, VA 23221, www.tkorrecords.com

* Wordbug - Losing It All, CD

In the early '90s, former members of Mad At The Sun and Hate That Smile came together to create a best-of-both-worlds outfit, U.K.-based Wordbug. *Losing It All* is the fruit of the band's labor from 1991-1994, featuring everything from melodic punk and hardcore to acoustic rock and emo. The frontman has the Paul Westerberg thing down pat, both vocally and lyrically. Musically, everything from Dag Nasty, Shudder To Think and Hüsker Dü, Blur, Big Star and Teenage Fanclub come to mind. The album is definitely a vast, comprehensive effort from a group of talented Brits who are thankfully maintaining recording careers. (EG)

Boss Tuneage Records, PO Box 74, Dandy, Beds, SG19 2WB, UK, www.bosstuneage.com

Ziggens, The - Greatest Zits: 1990 - 2003 + Bonus Surf CD, 2xCD

Thirteen years of the incessant joke band The Ziggens is showcased here, along with a second full disc of Ziggens surf classics, including "Burpin' USA." A low-rent Dead Milkmen, Ziggens were nonetheless essential in the forming of Skunk Records and had a major impact on a generation of silly punks. (AE)

Cornerstone R.A.S., 6285 E. Spring St., #234, Long Beach, CA 90804, www.cornerstonerass.com



Vicious Vicious / the Vindictives

▷ Vicious Vicious - Blood & Clover, CD

Minneapolis' Erik Appelwick is a chill young guy, but there's something that boils him up like pot of cooking noodles. You can tell that, despite the nonchalance of much of this superb release, he's capable of the most pillaging live performance conceivable when he's feeling it. His songs of stumping love and shaking ass resonate with the wattage of a high beam. He's got the groove that Hall & Oates had and the kind of far-reaching pop voice that is as dimensional as it is specific. Appelwick's a pop-star from now until his heart quits beating. (SM)

Twentyseven Records, 343 SW 184 Way, Pembroke Pines, Florida 33029-5427, www.twentysevenrecords.com

Viki / Hair Police - split, CD

It's impossible to tell the difference between Viki and Hair Police. They both sound like they filled a tub with bath water, taped microphones

to the bottom of it, hit record and then tossed a live hair dryer in among the suds. (SM)

Load Records, PO Box 35, Providence, RI 02901, www.loadrecords.com

▷ Vindictives, The - Curious Oddities And The Bare Essentials, CD

The Vindictives should not only be known as one of Chicago's best punk bands, but also as one of the world's best snotty punk bands ever. I was honored that day when Joey V. called me and asked me if I knew anyone who could play guitar to replace the departing Ben Weasel. Billy Blastoff was the perfect fit, and with him they went on to record some of the best punk 7-inches you will ever hear. This is a collection of some of the best songs from those records they put out since 1995. "Alarm Clocks," "Rocks In My Head," some Sex Pistol covers along with a few Christmas tunes make up this 14-song compilation of punk-rock perfection. Great guitar riffs with up-tempo drumming and Joey's great whiney and raspy vocals. Take notes, kiddies, as this is real punk rock, plain and simple. (BC)

Teat Productions PO Box 66470 Chicago, IL 60666, www.thevindictives.com

▷ Vindictives, The - Original Masters (1990-1992), CD

This CD collects all the Vindictives' earliest, pre-Lookout Records singles. 1992 wasn't really all that long ago, but between then and now punk rock has changed profoundly. Remember, 1992 was the year Nirvana's *Nevermind* topped the charts—"the year punk broke"—and things haven't been the same since. As time has marched on, and countless bands made names for themselves as Punk Rock Stars, it's easy to forget the way things were. This CD is a great reminder of a bygone era, a time when punk records didn't sound like they were recorded in a hospital, sterile and precise. A time when "pop punk" wasn't automatically synonymous with "songs about girls, sounds like the Ramones." A time when bands were their own publicists, booked their own tours and never dreamt they'd make a million dollars playing punk music. Ah, memories. The Vindictives were a kickass band that played fast, catchy punk-rock songs with a snotty singer who spat out sometimes funny but always thought-provoking lyrics. This CD won't let you forget it. (JC)

Teat Productions, PO Box 66470, Chicago, IL 60666, www.thevindictives.com

Reviewer Spotlight: Bart Niedzialkowski (BN)

V/A, Ground Rule Double. This came out just before the compilation explosion that saturated the scene with low-priced, redundant and often plain bad albums. That may have been the only reason it found itself in my record collection as I have since resisted from purchasing compilations. Or maybe it was the cardboard sleeve that snugly held the two 12" pieces of vinyl. Or was it the band listing on the back of said cardboard sleeve that really caught my attention? Truth is, I can't remember what led to me purchase this record at the long-gone Way Cool Records, but I do know that I'm glad I picked it up. Released by Chicago's great Divot Records, *Ground Rule Double* brought together local favorites such as Apocalypse Hoboken, Braid, the Bollweevils, Blue Meanies and 88 Fingers Louie and overlooked local acts such as Jerkwater, C-Clamp and Hubcap. Some out-of-state bands, including the Promise Ring and Scout, also made an appearance on one of the finest indie-rock compilations I've heard. With almost all of the bands now gone, this record has withstood the proverbial test of time and remains one of my favorite collectables.

Best of Europe: Public Toilets, *Wish I Was Stupid*; Dezerter, *Ziemia Jest Plaska*; Turbonegro, *Ass Cobra*; The Revolvers, *Tribute To Cliches*.

Demo-lition Derby: CD-Rs

Agents, The - Second Handgrenades, CDR

Lo-fidelity Joy Division from this English band? It's got some of that new wave sound that is popular now. I really like the drumming and special sound effects. (DI)
479 Hackney Road, London, E2 9ED, UK, www.theagents.tv

Ambivalent - S/T, CDR

If they lost the terrible metal parts, these guys could be a great melodic hardcore band a la 88 Fingers Louie. For this demo, though, *Boogada*-era Screeching Weasel comes to mind. (DH)
No contact information provided

Casket Life - Less Skill, More Kill, CDR

Old-school dirty punk/hardcore hybrid from Tempe, Ariz., that depends on raw guitars and a thick sound to propel the melodies. The gruff vocals complete the sound. There is enough here to justify keeping a close eye on this band as it progresses and matures. (BN)
www.casketlife.com

Charm School - More Of The Dumb Stuff, CDR

Happy pop-punk with strong female vocals. The melodies are simplistic, but I liked it, mainly because the lyrics are well-written. (JJG)
www.charmschoolmyc.com

Concisebloc - Perfect Waves Sessions, CDR

This is OK, but lacks originality. Standard quiet to loud, sung to screamed indie clichés. These guys have the chops, but hopefully later releases will reveal more distinction. (NS)
www.concisebloc.com

Embassy - In Flight Music, CDR

Incredible, fast six-song California-style pop-punk with excellent production. In the vein of Face To Face, which isn't a bad thing. Someone should sign them! (AE)
www.embassyrock.com

Glass And Ashes - S/T, CDR

Surprisingly fresh and enjoyable, trashy rock 'n' roll with definite hardcore elements, burly guitars, rapid melodies and anger-filled, throaty vocals. (BN)
glassandashes@hotmail.com

Hijack Jupiter - Farm Fresh Country Pure, CDR

This is a heaping, sloppy and wonderfully playful album of low-fi indie music. Subversive to their core, these 15 songs are everything rock should be: pained, fun and kick-ass. (BF)
946 Ackerman Ave, Syracuse, NY 13210

Killing Gift, The - Demo 2003, CDR

This is an homage to mid-'90s post-hardcore with female vocals. An easy reference would be Ashes or Samuel, but this stuff is *so much better*. Keep an eye out for these folks—highly recommended! (DM)
thekillinggift@yahoo.com

No Trigger - The World Is Not A Stage, CDR

Melodic hardcore from Massachusetts with emotional lyrics and a singing style that ranges from shouting to slightly emotive. (KM)
5 Walcott St., Oxford, MA 01540, www.notrigger.org

Payoff, The - Three Song Demo, CDR

An absolutely great demo from a Drive Like Jehu-sounding band. The production makes it awesome. Let's hope someone picks them up for a full-length. (EA)
1420F, 18th St. South, Birmingham, AL 35205,
beenpaidoff.tripod.com

Reynaloo's Weave - Sorry, But There Is No Good Or Evil, CDR

Here are three songs by this jazzy, Slint-esque Lexington, Ky., five-piece. Their secret weapon throughout the recording is the keyboard. It's good stuff. (DI)
weaverock@hotmail.com

Run Silent Run Deep Season of Fire - CDR

Run Silent Run Deep should take a cue from their band name and run. Silent. (JG)
www.runsilentrundeep.com

Sayers, The - S/T, CDR

Rock 'n' roll takes on a revamped energy brought on by this trio of vibrant musicians. A '60s Brit rock sound, sometimes mellow, but mod. (SP)
www.thesayers.org

2600 - S/T, CDR

Moody, tripped-out folk-rock. Good arrangements, strong songwriting. Makes you wanna hear more. Pinch of Wilco here, bit of Velvets there. Cool demo. (AJ)
124 Williams St., Northampton, MA 01060, dwedeme110@aol.com

Tunnel Of Love, The - Two A.M. In The Tunnel Of Love, CDR

Ever heard of rockabilly goth? Sure you haven't. How about punk cabaret? Didn't think so. Tunnel of Love could alleviate those misfortunes. (SM)
www.insidethetunnel.com

Uniteen - S/T, CDR

Seven songs that reminded me of the fun early '80s pogo punk. Dueling male and female vocals blurt out such lines as "I have sex a bunch of times/ but I still don't know what to do." (BC)
www.uniteen.home.mchsi.com

Vext - A Child's Fascination With Ugliness, CDR

Very interesting heavy, rhythmic hardcore from this UK three piece. It is their second EP. (BC)
www.geocities.com/v_ext/

Volcano Vulture - Wave Of Fur, CDR

Nothing stands out. It seems to be composed of power ballads and pop rock, and it feels like the whole album is filler, no substance. (JJG)
25 Strickland Lane, Ardmore, TN 38449

Wrong Brothers, The - Breaking Of The Sound, CDR

Inspired by *License To Ill*-era Beastie Boys, but with a few straight up rock/country/whatever songs thrown in. You can tell they had fun with this. (DH)
Bad Bunny Records, 52 Strickland Lane, Ardmore, TN 38449,
volcanovulture@yahoo.com

Vision - Detonate, CD

Fairly straight up, midtempo New York-style hardcore. Some nice sing-along opportunities, but a lackluster effort overall, especially when so many bands are upping the intensity ante these days. (DH)
 Chunksaah Records, PO Box 974, New Brunswick, NJ 08903, www.chunksaah.com

Vote, The - Vote Me Out, CD

The volume is turned up to 11 as The Vote (formerly When In Rome) layer guitars and drum roll their way through 11 tracks. The sound has a lot of different angles and is hard to pin down. Those who like the pop sound of the '90s should dig The Vote. (EA)
 Ass-Card Records, Annenstr. 51 4437, Dortmund, Germany, www.asscardrecords.com

Wake Up Cold - Deliver Me From Evil, CD

Hatebreed-style hardcore from the D.C. area. Here are 11 heavy and angry hardcore tracks that fans of this genre will probably appreciate. (TK)
 DFF Records, PO Box 686, Millersville, MD 21108, www.dffrecords.net

Walk Proud / Bullet Treatment / The Homeowners / Latchkey - Furious World, split CD

Oh, hardcore. Must you always be so nebulous? Is it metalcore, old, fast punk hardcore, mathcore? On this four-way split (Latchkey and the Homeowners from DC, and Walk Proud and Bullet Treatment from LA), the answers are much easier. All four bands play variations on the "extra fast punk is hardcore" theme. (RR)

Basement Records, PO Box 511, La Habra, CA 90633-0511, www.basementrecords.net

Wasps, The - Punkryonics, CD

Overground records has a knack for taking great single-producing European punk bands and unearthing their bonus material. The *Teenage Treats* blaster 7" was a must-have on any self-respecting collector's list. Now that it's available on CD, all fans of late '70s new wave and punk rock need The Wasps. (EA)

Overground Records, PO Box 1NW, Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, NE99, UK,
www.overgroundrecords.co.uk

Wasted - Suppress & Restrain, CD

Here's some tough and tuneful HC punk from Finland. They mix up the styles and tempos quite a bit, which keeps things interesting. With the thoughtful lyrics, hoarse-yet-melodic vocals, and just the overall feel, this comes off like a harder-edged, slightly more polished Crimpshrine. Good shit. (JC)

Combat Rock Industries, Hämeenpuisto 16 B 31, 33210 Tampere, Finland,
www.combatrockindustry.com

Weather, The - S/T, CD

This forecast calls for '70s classic-rock riffage, with no signs of letting up. It was music like this that turned me on to punk rock in the first place. More bluntly, I turned to punk to get away from bands like this. Apparently there's no escape. (JC)

Pidgeon English, PO Box 12561, Raleigh, NC 27605, www.pidgeonenglish.com

Wednesdays, The - You Will Gasp And They Will Breathe, CD

The Wednesdays' sound is packed with the growling vocals, pouncing drums and high-energy, high-speed guitar riffs of whiskey-doused blues. Toss in their keen ear for catchy hooks, and you've got a pretty smokin' record. (CC)

Reservation Records, 7101 SE Reed College Place, Portland, OR 97202, www.rezrecs.com

Weirdos, The - We Got The Neutron Bomb, Weird World Volume Two, 1977-1989, CD

More odds and ends from one of LA's flagship punk bands. This gets into their less dependable later period, but there are enough goodies here to provide a fine introduction to a great band that's often overlooked in favor of their more famous (X) or infamous (Germs) contemporaries. (JC)

Frontier Records, PO Box 22, Sun Valley, CA 91353, www.frontierrecords.com

Welton - The Soundtrack Of Our Lives, CD

Welton is a group of introspective Arkansas youth that play slow, sad melodic hardcore songs. It's a really well done recording, with perfect production allowing the well thought-out songs to shine. Borrowing the least obnoxious elements of the emo-pop revolution and inserting them into old-fashioned hardcore, Welton is terrific. (AE)

Snapdragon Records, 2535 N. Prospect Ave., Unit 117, Milwaukee, WI 53211,
www.snapdragonrecords.com

When Sparks Fly - We Who Are About To Die, CDEP

When Sparks Fly harmlessly adds its own two cents and nonsignature moves to the sea of pop-punk. It's been done before, but never hurts much. It's the music made of Nerf balls. (SM)

Nice Guy Records, PO Box 42815, Cincinnati, OH 45242-0815, www.niceguyrecords.com

Whiskey Sunday - S/T, CD

Vigorous melodic punk rock that is much better than the cover art (an appropriation of the Jack Daniels label...done to death, fellas) would lead anybody to rightly expect. They're from SoCal, but they remind me of a few great recent Chicago bands. The Mushuganas and Pegboy spring to mind. (JC)

Ancestor Records, 354 Shadow Run Drive, San Jose, CA 95110; Braindard Records, PO Box 21661, San Jose, CA 95151

William Academy, The - Five Fight Songs, CDEP

It sounds like New Order & Depeche Mode to me, which I guess means electroclash these days. Not my area of expertise, so I asked my wife her thoughts. She said, "It's good; similar to what The Faint or Adult are doing but not as slick, and I like that." (JC)

Ground Control Records, 834 Park Place #3A, Brooklyn, NY 11216

William's Eve - First Class Gun, CD

Screamo rock that I don't particularly like, but that's just because I'm not into this musical genre. It sounds well played, the singer is good, and the music is pretty well written—but I just can't get into it. (JJG)

Creep Records, PMB 220, 252 East Market St., West Chester, PA 19382, www.creeprecords.com

Willis, Wesley - Greatest Hits Volume Three, CD

This record, compiled before Wesley's untimely death last August, has an unexpected emotional poignance. Maybe it's just me, but knowing everyone's favorite 300-pound schizophrenic artist isn't around anymore just bums me out. This collection is 25 tracks of keyboard-based odes to everything from God to Bulls mascot Benny the Bull to Oprah Winfrey. Opener "Verbal Assault" is a funny, sad look at the tortured life of a schizophrenic. Then there are tracks like "Suck A Pitbull's Dick" and "I Whipped Spiderman's Ass." Bands like Tenacious D *wish* they could come up with the turns of phrase Wesley does: "Suck an alpaca's dick with Lawry's Seasoned Salt." On River Phoenix: "He collapsed and died like a Doberman." Damn, Wesley had some unique ways of saying things. There are a couple tracks with a backing band on this, and a lot of the songs have bizarre noises added to them (trains, trumpets, other weird stuff). The CD also features enhanced content with excerpts from a documentary about Wesley and more. Like his other stuff, this is best in small to medium-sized doses. Listen too long, and it'll make you nuts—but that's part of the Wesley Willis experience. We miss you, Wes. (KR)

Alternative Tentacles, PO Box 419092, San Francisco, CA 94141-9092,
www.alternativetentacles.com

Winterbrief, Tickets For A Peek, CD

Winterbrief's annoying, repetitive techno beats and multiple versions of one track cancel out their album's better qualities—especially the ultra-poppy cooing/whining vocals and the quirky rock sensibilities blended into the mixing of their dance tracks. The majority of the songs are fairly uninventive, despite their (sometimes) catchy hooks. (CC)

Heartcore Records, 3600 Tacoma Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90065, www.heartcorerecords.net

Wise - Sick World, CD

I'm really gonna try to be nice here. Not everybody with a song in their heart and available recording equipment should try to be a musician. This album is not good. In fact, it's the complete opposite of anything that's ever been even slightly tolerable. There. That wasn't too harsh. (AJ)

Menagerie Records, 440 Fifth Ave., Brooklyn, NY 11215, www.wiserocks.com

A Wish For Fire - S/T, CD

This Boston-based trio play dark and brooding indie pop rock, not pop punk. The songs tend to stay somewhat upbeat and are well constructed, both lyrically and song structure wise. In no way are they a downer band like early Pedro The Lion. Almost solid songs, almost there guys. (DM)

Self-released, www.awishforfire.com

With Love - Ice Age Generation, 7"

This one-sided, one song 7" is one beautifully designed packaged of fast-paced doom-rock. Not for the faint-hearted. (JG)

Heroine Records, PO Box 35, 47023, Cesena, Italy, www.heroine.org

Reviewer Spotlight: Sonia Pereira (SP)

Catania, Equally Cursed And Blessed. A long time ago, I was fortunate enough to come across this comic from the UK called *Hopeless Savages*. Inside the back page was a little contest which I entered and in turn won a compilation CD the comic writer had created for the lucky winner. That's how I learned about Catania. As soon as I heard the two Catania songs on this comic-book CD, I knew I'd fallen in deep for the rowdy voice of one Welsh lady, Cerys Matthews. If you haven't the pleasure of hearing Ms. Matthews' voice, please weep. Thank you, for it is that sad. Cerys has the kind of crazy messed-up voice that Tom Waits makes you swoon about. Her magical voice also complements the poppy UK sound of Catania perfectly. Listening to this amazing, rocking album with the spellbinding "Road Rage" and "Mulder And Scully" is like diving into a bowl of whipped cream—sensuous and tasty. Oh, yes. Other spectacular gems: "Londinum," "Karaoke Queen" and "Bulimic Beats." Cerys has a new solo record, a sort of country affair that I've yet to hear (very expensive, these imports), as I've read that she doesn't like pop music too much—such a shame because she's so darn good at it. Plus, she's on the 'swonderful Tom Jones CD *Reload*, where she sings the classic "Baby, It's Cold Outside" and ends up sounding like a Welsh Björk. If you like Kenickie or Shampoo or even, Bis, you'll like this band.

Cue it up: Sinead O'Connor, *Am I Not Your Girl?*; Tom Waits, *Time Waits For No Man*; Eartha Kitt, *Heavenly Eartha*; Nina Simone, *I Shall Be Released*; Rickie Lee Jones, *S/T*.



Words Away – These Past Weeks, CD

Another in the long line of poppy-punk bands with post-hardcore tendencies. Above average across the board, *These Past Weeks* nevertheless fails to make a lasting impact. The music is tight, and the writing is decent, but as a whole there isn't enough here to warrant another listen. (BN)

Boss Tuneage, PO Box 74, Sandy Bedfordshire SG19 2WB, UK, www.bosstuneage.com

Worn Thin – Remnants Of What Could Have Been, CD

Angry adolescent hardcore with tough vocals and singalongs supported by two skirmishing guitars, rapid-fire drumming and a sense of melody that prevails despite the ongoing chaos. I would have liked a little more variety in the lyrics, but that's a small obstacle in an otherwise smooth experience. (BN)

Youngblood Records, 217 W. Main St. Ephrata, PA 17522, www.youngblood-records.com

Wright, John North – White Widow, CD

Imagine an old man singing off-key, "Your mom's got AIDS, and your daddy's can't rock 'n' roll" with only a Casio and a horrible bassist and drummer behind him. That's what you'll get. No joke. (DM)

Fall Theory Sounds, PO Box 981341 Ypsilanti, MI 48198-1341, www.falltheory.com

Year Future – S/T, CDEP

Here's an interesting EP from a band composed of a cast of subversive punk/indie/emo all stars (members of The VSS, Angel Hair, Dead & Gone, The Pattern, Blackfork, etc.). This eclectic roster of musicians employ an eclectic number of influences, which produces an unusually eclectic sound. Slow, ethereal, schizophrenic and messy weirdness tie these four songs together. Varying undercurrents swing through each track, from '80s goth-punk to early '90s emo(tional hardcore). It's a bit of an overstated mishmash of styles, but it ain't bad. Definitely not a record for everyone, but fans of the GSL/31G labels should have their hands all over this. (MG)

Gold Standard Laboratories, PO Box 65091, Los Angeles, CA 90065, www.goldstandardlabs.com

A Year To Forget – Apostasy, CD

Junky, noisy emo with no sense of song structure. They try to use big SAT words to show how deep they are. A few OK ideas here and there, but the songwriting is just poor. (AJ)

Crep Records, 252 E. Market Street, Westchester, PA 19382, www.creprecords.com

Young And Sexy – Life Through One Speaker, CD

Adolescent indie-pop-folk outfit with female and male vocals, placid harmonies with a few kickers and arty song titles like "Herculean Bell-boy" and "One False Move." The album gets a little strained after the first couple of songs, perhaps the listener is left wanting more than dejected characters with naïve faces. (SP)

Mint Records, PO Box 3613, Vancouver, BC, V6B 3V6, Canada, www.mintrecs.com

Zientara, Don – Sixteen Songs, CD

This solo project from underground-celebrity producer at Inner Ear is a complete exercise in minimalism—from the cover art to the songwriting to the recording. Recorded on a one-track reel-to-reel tape deck, the songs are completely void of anything but themselves. This stripping down is meant to show the intimacy and individuality

of songwriting, or rather making art in general. By using this technique, Zientara's songs interact with their audience on a more person-to-person level. Also, the recording is charming in its simplicity; at one point, a dog begins barking in the background. An album that should be appreciated for its artistic merit. (AJA)

Northern Liberties, 3819 Beecher St NW, Washington DC 20007

V/A – Azadi!, A Benefit Compilation For The Revolutionary Association Of The Women Of Afghanistan, 2xCD

This eclectic compilation strikes definite political chords with RAWA founder Meena's softly remarkable folk sound and various tracks such as Different Strokes' ragtime-influenced "Rhthm'A'Ning." Some pretty instrumentals and hefty rap/dance tunes follow. The best: Deep Dickollective's "Burnout," Saadet Turkoz's "Silence On The Kazakh Steppes" and The Loins' "Home Of The Five Dollar Tan." (SP)

Fire Museum Records, PO Box 591754, San Francisco, CA 94159, www.museumfire.com

V/A – A Closet Full of Clothes, 12"

A compilation from the label who brought us hardcore's The Ultimate Warriors ("blast beats + wrestling = FUN!"). Somewhat surprisingly, the moshing has been eschewed for an eclectic mix of music equally loud and grating. My Name Is Rar Rar throws on some demented, spastic noise that sounds like evil elves jumping on their instruments with occasional samples of John Williams scores. Small Rocks creates a foundation off of a strong beat that shifts manically between subdued ambience and tense chaos. Pearls And Brass is the only conventional band on here, adding a bluesy honky-tonk number. Nice Nice's quirky instrumentals are so idiosyncratic it makes me want to stomp Goombas. In pure Black Eyes tradition, they drown on some smother the listener in a sea of choppy, percussive violence and a walloping bass riff. Hair Police overlay avalanche-like textures and build them into sheer noise guaranteed to make ears bleed. Doormouse provides my favorite track, with loopy beats, melodic noise, and tasteful samples. Mammal bring it home with rhythmic, garbled feedback so monotonous you forget that it's over. (VC)

White Denim Records, 2247 Riverbend Road, Allentown, PA 18103, www.whitedenim.com

V/A – Compilation: Volume 1 Songs From North Carolina, CD

Twenty-one unique bands and songs from North Carolina—an eclectic mix, with most bands defying simple classifications. Some of my faves include Goner, Gerty, Razzle, The Sames, Jett Rink, The Ghost Of Rock and The Nein. If you're into good and diverse indie rock, definitely check this out. (NS)

Pox World Empire, 1512 James St., Durham, NC 27707, www.poxworldempire.com

V/A – Dark Forms, CDEP

Yep, it's dark techno, feature four original tracks Sinuous and Alex K, with two remixes by Seattle's Architekt and Randominde from the Ukraine. (JG)

Dark Techno Records, www.dark-techno-records.com

V/A – The Fold Compilation, 2xCD

This is a compilation of a bunch of bands who've played at the California indie-rock club The Fold. It's a good way to preview some much hyped acts as BRMC and The Polyphonic Spree and hear some even

better, relatively, unknowns like Midnight Movies and Mike Stinson. Some good/some crap. (AJ)

Credit Records, 1431 McCollum St., Los Angeles, CA 90026, www.credit-records.com

V/A – The Last Thing We Ever Did, CD

A great comp from little-known Eugene, Ore.-based Schapendoes Records' experimental, acoustic and otherwise eccentric projects. It features tracks from Chin Up Chin Up, Black Darts and Wet Confetti. The liner notes are super hard to read though—I needed my glasses. (JG)

Schapendoes Records, PO Box 3547, Eugene, OR 97403, www.schapendoesrecords.com

V/A – Lullaby For The Apocalypse, CD

This is a sampler for Uprising, a label that releases everything from rock 'n' roll to radio-friendly pop-punk and melodic emo to chugging hardcore. Bands include: Fall Out Boy; Kill Pill; 7angels 7plagues; Nehemiah; Stretch Armstrong and more. (MG)

Uprising Records, PO Box 480 Laguna Beach, CA 92652, www.uprisingrecords.com

V/A – Monosyllabic 001, CD

Monosyllabic Records' first sampling of their roster is a great collection of math rock and experimental tracks. This includes established faves like Mercury Program with some surprising and spiny new bands like Volta do Mar, who could add new momentum to music made for lovers of logic. (CC)

Monosyllabic Records, www.monosyllabicrecords.com

V/A – New York City Rock N Roll, CD

Unlike most comps, this one has a wide variety of rock 'n' roll. There's some Stooges-type sludge, '77-style punk, even some rock with a hint of (shudder) '80s pop metal. The person who released it claims this album "blurs the lines between trashy glam rock, righteous chick rock and arty metal" and that represents the bands that will be the next wave of rock 'n' roll. I don't know if the music from NYC will change the world, but I do know there are a number of good songs on this comp. But, really, what city would want to be the next Seattle? (JJG)

Radical Records, 77 Bleeker St. #C2-21, New York, NY 10012, www.radicalrecords.com

V/A – Not Just Boys' Fun: Female Fronted Bands Kickin' Ass, 2xCD

Like the title says, this release has two CDs' worth of lady-fronted punk bands. The cool part about this is they're Germany, Japan, England, Netherlands, China and the U.S. The bands from Japan were fun as hell, but most of the music didn't rock me. (KM)

Wolverine, Kaiserswerther Str. 166, 40474 Dusseldorf, Germany, www.wolverine-records.de

V/A – Open Up And Say...@<% | * [!]: A Tigerbeat6 Compilation, CD

Highlights of this awesome comp from this beloved alternative electronic label. Include tracks by the Bug With Daddy Freddy (blasting reggae meets hip-hop meets electro track) and Com.a (a glitchy, Casio-fueled dance tune). Other artists include Crack:WAR, Cex, Stars As Eyes, Numbers, Dwayne Sodahberk, Electric Company and more. (MG)

Tigerbeat6, PO Box 460922 San Francisco, CA 94146-0922, www.tigerbeat6.com

V/A – Promenade Food Compilation #1, 7"

A weird and sometimes disturbing compilation from Sweden that throws together some obscure bands whose only common links are these songs about, you guessed it, food. Ranging from nu-wave elec-

Reviewer Spotlight: Rex Reason (RR)

The Pink Fairies, Kings Of Oblivion. Let's get pto. While the musical era sandwiched between the hippies and the punkers is generally written off in a lot of underground circles as a country- and prog-rock void, there were some exceptional exceptions. Not quite fitting in with the glam bands or the early metal bands were The Pink Fairies. Although not quite an obvious precursor to punk rock as the Stooges, you don't have to squint too hard to see a line from the Fairies to the Pistols. While about half of *Kings Of Oblivion* is '70s boogie-rock, the other half sounds almost like a Led Zeppelin take on the Bad Religion formula. The best example (and song) is the opener, "City Kids." From there, things lose focus a bit on some longer tracks, but the energy has been recaptured by the end of the album. *Kings Of Oblivion* is out of print in the U.S., but the currently available UK CD version tacks on two of the better songs from this era, as well as some alternate versions.

Five great proto-punk songs: "30 Seconds Over Tokyo," Rocket From The Tombs; "Sister Ray," Velvet Underground; "Seven & Seven Is," Love; "Loose," Stooges; "I'm Straight," The Modern Lovers.

v/a Punk Academy / v/a Wig in a Box

tronica to lo-fi pop, the songs are catchy despite their oddity. It's definitely something entirely different, original and goofy. (BN)

Promenade Recordings/Fredrik Kullman, Edovagen 24 A, s-132 30 Saltsjö-Boo, Sweden, promenade@spray.se

V/A - Punk Academy, Vol. 1, CD

Twenty tracks of unrelated bands are a little much for my ADD. The songs are good, but it's just like listening to your best friend's mixed tape. One moment it's a ska, then HC, then a pop-punk song. There is a funny song dedicated to Ms. Britney S. by Skirtbox. (DI)

You and Whose Army Records, PO Box 34398, London, NW6 4XT, UK, www.yawarecords.com

V/A - Punk Goes Acoustic, CD

I was originally looking forward to this release, but the numerous delays and lineup changes doused my excitement. Good thing, too, as the final roster reads like an MTV awards show. The fine contributions by Strike Anywhere, Rise Against and Coalesce get lost in the mediocrity that surrounds them. (BN)

Fearless Records, 13772 Goldenwest St., #545, Westminster, CA 92683, www.fearlessrecords.com

V/A - Radio CPR: Begin Live Transmission, CD

Any time I hear something from Dischord, even if it's by someone I don't like, there's always this great sense of respect because the label's always so community-based. This release is no different, if not more so. This comp is a sampler of what one can hear from Washington DC's own 97.5 Radio CPR. This is a free radio station with a political agenda to assist in covering news topics that the mainstream media won't cover. Aside from the stories here, they also play an amazing array of tunes that would not normally be played on commercial radio: hip hop (Head-Roc) to indie rock (El Guapo) to electronic (EBSK, Trance/Arcade

to punk (Machetres, Crucial Defect) to R&B (Afi) to alt-country (Canyon) and so on. There are also Station IDs and brief interview bits to check out as well. This one is all over the map, but it is a quality release. (DM)

Dischord Records, 3819 Beecher St. NW, Washington, DC 20007, www.dischord.com

V/A - Return To The Scene Of The Crime, CD

Take 24 bands playing mainly crusty, garage-y punk, dirty rock 'n' roll, and snotty old-school punk, give them 24 hours to record their contribution, then watch the madness unfold. The standout efforts on this hectic compilation appear courtesy of the Gobshites, the Numbskulls, Rat Fink and the Downbeat 5. (BN)

Good Cop/Bad Cop Records, PO Box 653, Foxboro, MA, www.goodcopbadcoprecords.com

V/A - A Santa Cause: It's a Punk Rock Christmas, CD

Proceeds from this mixed bag of Christmas-themed originals and covers go to a good cause: the Pediatric AIDS Foundation. Featuring bands like MXPX, Blink-182, and Fall Out Boy, this CD would make a great gift for a younger relative you're trying to get into punk. (AE)

Immortal Records, 12200 Olympic Blvd., Suite 400, Los Angeles, CA 90064, www.immortalrecords.com

V/A - Sex & Subversion: A Thick Records Document, CD

This Thick Records sampler is, for the most part, a survey of contemporary punk. Highlights include Sullen's Red Aunts-esque "All Fall Down," The Tossers' pub-punk anthem "Time To Go" and Calliope's short but spry, electronic trickle-tempoed "Future Days." (CC)

Thick Records, PO Box 220245, Chicago, IL 60622, www.thickrecords.com

V/A - Six Steps To A Better You: A Self-Improvement Compilation, CD

Back before the MP3 reigned supreme, two of the best ways to check out new bands for the least financial commitment was to buy a band's 7" or to check out several bands at once via a compilation. With six

bands each providing four songs on this compilation, that's like six 7-inches at once—the world's first 42 inch record! Thankfully, it's not the same 7" over and over, either. Amsterdam's Nazis From Mars start things off with warped techno art punk. Peelander-Z rip through their usual goof punk from Japan by way of NYC. Anaheim, Calif.'s Lipstick Pickups blush and sneer their way through six snarly, girly garage gems. Bobot Adrenaline proves pop punk and a social consciousness aren't mutually exclusive. Zero Content are punk perhaps in attitude only, providing six tracks best described as sonic experiments. And, T(n)AP rocks the deconstructed discopunk. (RR)

Geykido Comet Records, PO Box 3806, Fullerton, CA, www.gcrecords.com

V/A - Times Are Hard For Dreamers, CD

This 17-track benefit compilation for an after-school art program in New York City features bands from all over the country. The overall sound is "pure emo": Embrace and John Henry West, West Coast style. An artfully designed letter pressed CD cover and informative booklet is included. (DI)

Waking Records, 1803 Riverside Drive, Apt 5M, New York, NY 10034, www.wakingrecords.com

V/A - Wig In A Box: Songs From & Inspired By Hedwig And The Angry Inch, CD

The Breeders, Sleater-Kinney, Frank Black, Jonathan Richman, Ben Kweller with Ben Folds & Ben Lee and so many more on one freakin' record. And guess what? It's good. A fine accompaniment to an even finer rock opera. Proceeds to benefit the Hetrick-Martin Institute. (AA)

Off Records, PO Box 82614, Portland, OR 97282, www.offrecords.com

Hey, we want your records:

Punk Planet 4229 N. Honore Chicago IL 60613

Reviewer Spotlight: Kyle Ryan (KR)

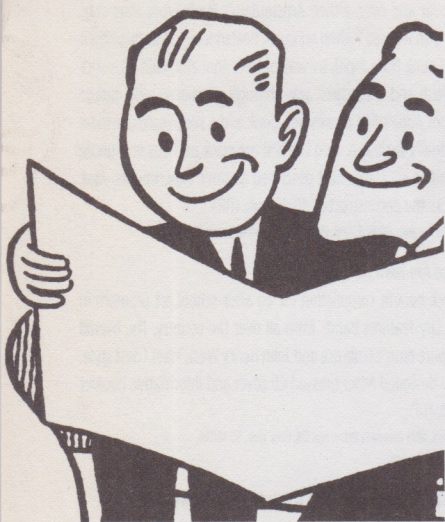
V/A - *Four Two Pudding*. During my formative years in punk rock, way back in the early '90s, I used to pick up many an album from Very Small Records, an odd little label with some bizarre bands—and bizarre compilations. This one, originally released in 1993, is a crazy mixture of straight-up hardcore like Econochrist, pop-punk like Screaming Weasel, melodic hardcore from Samiam and Offspring and then just plain odd songs from forgotten bands like Pounded Clown, Sewer Trout, Soup and Horny Mormons. *Four Two Pudding* was a snapshot of punk in the early '90s: some of it awesome, some of it good, some of it inexplicable. (Pounded Clown and Lizards sounded like Bozo was their singer.) There are a couple of rare tracks on here, too, such as Jawbreaker's quasi-hardcore song "Fantastic Planet" and a song by Downfall, Matt and Tim's post-Op Ivy, pre-Rancid band. The weird songs on *Four Two Pudding* are awesome, though. Maybe it's just my nostalgia for singing along to Horny Mormons' "Field Of Gerbils" with my high school friends, but its tale of gerbil baseball still cracks me up—"hit the gerbil over the fence/ yahoo, yee-ha/ goddamn, homerun." So does Sewer Trout's tale of America's snack-food supremacy in "Holiday In Romania." Then there are some gems of early '90s East Bay melodic punk, such as Fuel's "The Name Is" and 23 More Minutes' "My Machine Gun." Very Small rereleased this record a couple years back, and I definitely think you should pick it up.

Bang bang bang you're fucking dead: Outkast, *Speakerboxxx/The Love Below*; Kevin Devine, *Make The Clocks Move* (reviewed this issue); Sicko, *You Can Feel The Love In This Room*; Superchunk, *Foolish*; Guided By Voices, *Under The Bushes, Under The Stars*.

Reviewer Spotlight: Neal Shah (NS)

Dresden 45, *Paradise Lost*. Despite what EPMD had to say, I've always had a fondness for "the crossover." But in this case I'm referring to the glorious mixture of punk and metal (second to my heart only after funk and metal) that began around the mid-'80s. An overlooked gem of that era is Dresden 45's first and only full-length, which was actually a compilation of most of the songs from their first two 7-inches. These guys were from Texas, home to fellow thrash pioneers, DRI. As much as I loved DRI, even up to *4 Of A Kind*, this album blows *Crossover* (their genre-defining album) out of the water. Whereas *Crossover* was a little too slick and slow compared to DRI's previous work, Dresden 45's *Paradise Lost* was still raw and hardcore, only with better musical chops than most of their hardcore peers. Their album is filled with speed-metal riffs and leads, but it still retains the roughness and intensity of punk's early days. And the singer has a great hardcore yell along the lines of Dischord's early roster. For all intents and purposes, this is just a great hardcore album with metal influences. If you missed out the first time around, this album is going to be rereleased on Arclight Records soon with lots of extra songs. It's a must for fans of thrash and crossover, who I'm sure are poring over this magazine right now.

I'm still mad about the Average Joe finale: NoMeansNo, Fine Day, Soulside, Death Angel, Exodus, Big Boys, JFA, Beowulf, RKL, Police, Amebix.



zines

THIS ISSUE'S REVIEWERS: Amy Adoyzie (AA), Joe Biel (JB), Vincent Chung (VC), Patrick Sayers (PS), Claire Sewell (CS).

* Agriculture #4

Unfortunately, this seems to be the last issue of this great zine since its editor, Brian, is heading back to school. I remember reviewing the first issue of this, and it's been great to watch its short run. The quality of the articles was always top-notch, and this issue is no exception. It begins with an article on opening a community arts and youth space in the Grand Cities area of North Dakota. Then there is an excellent, well-researched article on the intricacies of loans and the class structure. The piece, "Hicks and Chicks: When 'Country' Goes to War," is an interesting comparison between a few of country music's latest controversies (i.e.: the Dixie Chicks' contentious remarks and Toby Keith's controversial song). Also included are a few local photographs, several short stories, and "The Layperson's Guide to Media Ownership in America," which provides an interesting analysis on which corporations own and control various media outlets. I hope Brian can find the time to bring this great zine back eventually. (CS)

Free, 1107 19th Ave. S., Grand Forks, ND 58201

AK Ink #5

A scene zine for all the kids in America's neglected icebox, Anchorage, Alaska. Beer, music, movie and show reviews along with a SpitShine interview. Well-done and purty too. (AA)

No price given, PO Box 244235, Anchorage, AK 99524, www.akink.org

Amazine #1

At times, *Amazine's* political idealism strikes a chord, though mostly this first issue reads like *The Bill of Rights For Dummies*. Nine photocopied pages of minimal artwork and simplified versions of well-known U.S. documents hardly justifies the asking price. (PS)

\$5, PO Box 128, Lake Charles, LA 70602

* American't #5

Like MTX songs, the theme is "Mostly About Girls," and this *Cometbus*-influenced zine (almost embarrassingly so—the handwriting's an exact replica of Aaron's) documents 25 romances in the writer's life. 25!!!!!! Who is this guy, James Bond? What's great was that he was the ever-unpopular marching-band geek. When he left public school, he performed in summer tours because he couldn't get enough of that trum-

pet. Granted, half of the girls involved play the clarinet or were super into goth. I guess if Bill Gates is married, then nerds play hide the salary, too! (25?!) It's a nice spectrum of romances: the torrid affairs ruined by miscommunication, the whimsical friends with benefits and obviously the crushers that push our protagonist to dabble in a fun, but daring game called "suicide." (25!) For many, I found myself trying to tell the protagonist, "You asshole! You moron! You don't treat a lady like that, you insensitive prick!" before realizing that I, too, have fumbled such romantic follies. Brutally honest, the 24 failures will feed into any post-breakup masochism like those darker Jawbreaker songs. But it has a happy ending, with the 25th being "the one." (VC)

\$3, www.palpalpal.net, american't@peoplepc.com

Bad Bunny #1

Tennessee-based Bad Bunny Records created this in order to get their name and the names of their artists "out there." In other words, this is synergy at work. It's more of a poorly photocopied booklet of ads than it is anything resembling a zine. But if you're into that stuff, I'm sorry. (AA)

\$1, Bad Bunny Records, 52 Strickland Lane, Ardmore, TN 38449, vokanovulture@yahoo.com

Before the Mortgage #4

Consisting of more than a dozen essays from its two editors and a handful of contributors, *BTM* tackles the post-college lifer who refuses to succumb to yuppie-dom. An interesting read into childhood memories and present-day trials as experienced by your contemporaries. (AA)

\$3.95, Christina Amini, PO Box 68, Ross, CA 94957, www.beforethemortgage.com

* Bitch #22

This popular feminist magazine continues to amble along responding to pop culture. Much of it is lost on me because I'm not too familiar with pop culture, though I don't double its importance. Dominant culture is constantly full of sexist and otherwise grossly stereotyping and oppressive themes. This issue reflects quite a bit on television programs I am not familiar with and thus not interested in reading about

and the family unit. A great bit of brain food is presented despite this, and it's perfect reading for a lonely lefty activist or feminist living in a small town needing some support to be convinced she isn't alone in a scary world. (JB)

\$5, 1611 Telegraph Ave., Suite 515, Oakland, CA 94612, www.bitchmagazine.com

* Chihuahua And Pitbull #3

Oh, how I love this zine! I don't know how he does it, but Ethan manages to make his everyday experiences at various crap jobs seem like the funniest things in the world. Maybe it's his David Sedaris-like humor. Perhaps it's just that, well, stories about working at a hot dog stand under a maniacal boss (told in comic version—Ethan, you really should put out a comic as well) and at a haunted house with a bunch of Louisiana bumpkins are just plain funny. In this issue, he also spends time working at a fireworks stand up in Wisconsin where, believe it or not, he encounters the same brand of folks as he does down in Louisiana. I guess since Ethan works such crazy, boring jobs that he has to pass the time and make it all sound interesting somehow. Trust me, he doesn't disappoint. Get this! (CS)

\$2, Ethan, PO Box 72581, New Orleans, LA 70172

Dirty Dog #6

This zine out of England is packed with interviews, including Chris Murray, Inspection 12 and Propagandhi. There are also a couple of personal essays and lots of record reviews. It's short without a lot of filler, which is great. (CS)

\$2, Nick, 28 Barons Mead Road, High Wycombe, Bucks, HP12 3PD, UK

Emmie, Vol. 6, Issue #1

I'm very impressed with this student-written and produced music publication. They've got great interviews with well-known bands (Denali, !!!, and All Girl Summer Fun Band, to name a few), plus lots of clever and fun-to-read record reviews (take that, *Spin*). I highly recommend this one. (CS)

No price given, Chris Vinyard, Memorial Union #514, 800 Langdon St., Madison, WI 53706, emmiezine@hotmail.com



Flotation Device #10

Documenting his extended stay with a Costa Rican family, this Chicagoan combines photos and sparsely written journal entries that still manage to capture his emotions. Balancing his shyness and humor, *Flotation Device* is an interesting travelogue that manages to veer off the beaten path. (PS)

\$2, 1242 Dean St., Woodstock, IL 60098, flotationdevice@hotmail.com

F.N.S

Jam-packed, old-school-looking punk zine that includes a few columns, interviews with The Jimmies, Kings Of Nuthin and the Epidemic. Everything is rounded out with the obligatory reviews. Overall, it's pretty good, but feels like it's missing something. (CS)

\$04, FNS Publishing, PO Box 1299, Boston, MA 02130, fns_publishing@msn.com

Friction #1

A pocket-size perzine overflowing with youthful idealism, poetry and philosophy. *Friction* is alive with a positively nervous energy that is surprisingly articulate and (thankfully) free of angsty, self-righteous jargon. (PS)

No price given, c/o Jackson Smith, 4902 Umatilla, Boise, ID 83709, www.geocities.com/loophole.distro

* Glossololia #3: The Upper Left Hand Corner Of The Map

An aesthetically beautiful zine about the landscape, social structure and history of Port Townsend, Wash., told in personal-zine format. It paints a portrait of harmony despite its history of racism, homophobia and prostitution. One scene explains that the queer kids and the homophobes go to the same parties and compare arrest records while not addressing their differences. It's all told by a woman who works in a copy shop, and it's printed on post-consumer paper, making this far

more ecologically sound than most other so-called environmental zines. There's even a list of sources. I thoroughly enjoyed the writing style, presentation and voice. I feel that it gives me a better idea of what life is like in Port Townsend. (JB)

\$2, Sarah, PO Box 1942 Port Townsend, WA 98368, enormigean@hotmail.com

Green Anarchy #14

John Zerzan and co. bring us another issue of this anarcho-primitivist mainstay. Full of international news, thought and reflection. Always a mind expanding read. (JB)

\$3, PO Box 11331 Eugene, OR 972440

Hoi Polloi Skazine #8

For better or worse, ska has been noticeably absent from the music press lately, which makes this zine essential reading for those rude boys still lurking about. This issue features interviews with Rocksteady 7, a tribute to Joe Strummer, a look back at Lee Perry and reviews o' plenty. (PS)

\$3, PO Box 11347, Rochester, NY 14613

Impact Press #47

In this dense political zine, some articles are written well, intelligently articulating an issue with objective diplomacy. Others are sensationalistic propaganda on the same level of Rush Limbaugh. It's a diverse buffet of lefty topics that needs to lose the record reviews. (VC)

\$2, PMB 361, 10151 University Blvd., Orlando, FL 32817

* In Your Room #6

Tour diaries are difficult reads because 1) Drinking and smoking weed with strangers is sweet, but nothing to write home about, much less make a zine of it. 2) Who wants to read about being

cooped up in a van for exhaustingly long drives and how one copes with the boredom? 3) Romanticizing the touring lifestyle needs to be subtly dropped in casual description, not told from a point of self-indulgent bragging. This diary covers a cross-country jaunt across the U.S. and reads like old Indian Summer lyrics—lowercases reign supreme with sentence fragments whose validity or profoundness still eludes me. These rambling phrases lack insight or at least any interest. As open-minded as they appear to be, much of the zine lashes out prejudgmental contempt for those that fail to conform to their wacky underground lifestyle. Unity, y'all. It comes with an enjoyable CD compilation featuring local acts from spoken word to folk. (VC)

No price given, PO Box 1514, Bellingham, WA, serene@yourheartbreaks.com

* Invasion of the Bee Girls #2

In the spirit of academic pursuit, Melanie spent a month in Montreal during the summer of 2003. The result isn't so much about her thesis or methodology but more about realizing that the more you learn about a place, the less you actually know about it. Her thoughts are divided into 30 numbered points, with alphabetized subpoints within them. The format is similar to that of a traditional outline, which creates a disjointed non-narrative, but still works somehow. In a way, this set-up leaves the reader feeling as if they're dropping in on an internal monologue, much akin to a stream of consciousness but without the babble-factor. Alongside her observations of the Montreal cityscape we are treated to a mini history lesson of Quebec and the separatist movement. Melanie just goes to affirm what we've all been thinking: Canada should be on our top three list of "places to escape to in a anti-heroic gesture." (AA)

\$1, Melanie H., PO Box 13126, Gainesville, FL 32604

ABOUT OUR REVIEWS: We make every attempt to review all the zines (or magazines) we receive, as long as they are released independently. However, despite our best efforts, not every zine ends up in here for a myriad of reasons. Records marked with a little eye (◉) are designated as "highlight" reviews by the reviewer. That means it's a zine that really stands out for them this time around, but just because a review doesn't have an eye doesn't mean it isn't good. Finally, if a reviewer doesn't like your zine, it's just one person's opinion, so don't freak out. We're sure you put a good deal of work into your project and that alone is worth some congratulations!



Jersey Beat #74

Jim Testa's done it again. While the rest of us are dragging out feet trying to put out a 24-page zine, he chucks up 152 pages like it ain't no thang. Highlights include interviews with Saves The Day, The Ergs, Brand New, Circle Jerks, Dirt Bike Annie and Contraband, among others. (AA)

\$3, 418 Gregory Ave., Weehawken, NJ 07086, www.jerseybeat.com

Kisoff Fanzine #9

Chris' writing in this issue is spare yet very personal. The best moments reveal themselves in small details or bits of conversations. He simply recounts stories of friends, dreams and going to shows set alongside a great layout. This is one of those rare zines that leaves you immediately wanting more. (CS)

\$2, Chris Kiss, 2-256 Flora St., Ottawa, ON, K1R 5R9 Canada

Left Back #1

Chadd's put out a great first issue with lots of variety. There are hopeful, personal essays and political pieces and poems, as well as an interview with Neil of *Wiener Society* zine. I'm sure Chadd's future issues will only become better. (CS)

\$2/free to prisoners, Fanorama Society Global Headquarters, 109 Arnold Ave., Cranston, RI 02905, fanoramai@aol.com

Lonely Squirrel

Some personal ramblings and analysis taken from a journal. It reflects a bit on punk culture and relevance to other things, but it was hard to focus on, as it was clearly written more for the author's sake. (JB)

No price given, lonelysquirrelzine@hotmail.com

* Mine: An Anthology Of Reproductive Rights #2

In the face of this country's recent ban on "partial birth" abortions, this zine is an important and powerful resource. Women of all ages and from all over write about their experiences with abortion here. Although many of the stories are not easy to read, this zine is very much an open forum, and each story is moving in its own way. Meredith also provides a rant about rights and access. This zine is a testament to what Bush and his pro-life cohorts so carelessly forget: Contrary to what they would want us to believe, abortion is very rarely an easy or careless experience for anyone, yet it should remain a necessary choice for the health, welfare and sanity of all women. (CS)

\$3, Meredith Stern, PO Box 7466, Philadelphia, PA 19101

Nerve, The #31

The Nerve exemplifies the notion that nothing is perfect. Sure, Canada's got universal health care, but they also export *The Nerve*. That said, I'm none too fond of this free newsprint rag. Mediocre interviews with Swingin' Utters, Social Distortion, Youth Brigade and Electric Eye. (AA)

Free, 508-825 Granville St., Vancouver, BC, V6K 1K9, Canada, www.thenervemagazine.com

No #5

Still the same ol' No dribble with sophomoric prose and notebook doodles. An essay about a dream is also included—I've said it before and I'll say it again: Writing about dreams is suck! Yes, suck. It didn't actually happen, so who cares? I sure don't. (AA)

\$1, PO Box 502, Shingle Springs, CA 95682, theprojectno@hotmail.com

Normal Man #2

Sweden's *Normal Zine* will surely haunt me for the duration of my life as a critic, with its hip layout, apparent sXe hardcore slant, cutesy comic strips and...content that I'll likely never understand. Anyway, this issue features an interview with cartoonist Lars Sgunnesson along with a heap of music and zine reviews. (PS)

No price given, promenadefanzine@hotmail.com

Northeastern Anarchist #8

Following a theme of "anarchists in the workplace," this issue documents varying accounts of struggle in organizing and maintaining a worker's union as well as a history of other working class workers organizations. Overall, the articles are often informative, but the writing can be a bit dry at times. (PS)

\$4, PO Box 230685, Boston, MA 02123, www.nefac.net

No. 13 #5

Boston scene newsprint zine devoted to all things wicked punk rock: interviews with Photon Torpedoes, The Bruisers and independent all-ages venue Exit 23. And they keep reprezentin' wif local music and zine reviews. (AA)

\$0€, PO Box 1299, Boston, MA 02130, www.FMSBoston.com

No. 13 #6

Interviews with S.W.A.T., Chanticleer, Zippo Raid, Jerry's Kids, The Street Dogs, The Struggle with local music and show reviews. All in all, pretty uninteresting because after a while all these punk rock bands and their interviews start sounding the same (just like their muzak). (AA)

\$0€, PO Box 1299, Boston, MA 02130, www.FMSBoston.com

One Woman's Struggle

An emotional and eye-opening account of one female prisoner's battle to keep custody of her child. This short read shines some needed light on some disturbing laws and is an urgent call to those of us not imprisoned to lend some needed support. (PS)

\$1 or trade (free to prisoners), 109 Arnold Ave., Cranston, RI 02905

Patty Duke Fanzine, The #5

This ongoing series couples reprinted photos & articles documenting the life of the squeaky-clean television icon of the '60s with a double 7" featuring indie acts (The Falldowns, Saturday Looks Good To Me & more) paying tribute to Ms. Duke. A highly recommended package of haunting pop-culture bliss. (PS)

\$8, PO Box 32624, Detroit, MI 48232, www.topqualityrockandroll.com

* Pearshaped #5

An awesome interview with female hip hop group, Sisterz Of The Underground, opens this engaging feminist zine. There are also pieces about local bars, skateboarding as a woman, Enid Collins handbags, an interview with a fashion designer, knitting, belly dancing and some zine reviews. While many of these topics are of no interest to me, reading about them in this zine was still interesting and made sense. I think it's important to illustrate your interests honestly in a zine, even if that means not being "cool" as a result. The most exciting/unique aspect, though, is the fact that almost half of this zine is in Japanese (the other half in English). How often do you see that? The cover is a beautiful, minimalist colored pencil drawing. (JB)

\$2, 764 Page St., #3, San Francisco, CA 94117, pearshapedzine@yahoo.dk

Philadelphia Independent #12

A classic broadsheet newspaper that gets down to the nitty-gritty of what is going on. They do a good job of rabble-rousing and finding interesting stories (Ghettoopolis, street clean ups) even though I don't live in Philly. (JB)

\$1, 1026 Arch St. Philadelphia, PA 19107

Sprawl #4

A potpourri of collaborators mish-mash this cut'n paste poetry collection. Unlike much of the garbage *PP* receives in this department, these folks are witty. Articulating their words with a keen sense of pop-culture vernacular, the commentary is funny and stabs sharply while lacking bohemian pretentiousness. (VC)

\$1, 643 Strong Rd., South Windsor, CT 06074

Stir Crazy #7

A chunk of this zine is devoted to a long and insightful article on the history of incarceration and the prison system. There are also a few zine and comics reviews plus some reprinted newspaper prison articles. It could use a few more articles, but otherwise its good stuff. (CS)

\$3, PO Box 25148, Rochester, NY 14625

Streetmusic F.C. #9

I wish I could actually read this Scandinavian zine. Instead of a jam-packed issue of 500 regurgitated press releases, this music zine chose to write lengthy coverage on a handful of topics including a history of oi and an interview with Japan's Bakiumu (Vacuum). Hey, look! Tons of record reviews! (VC)

No price given, Stefan Fels, Grugvangen 21, 653 43 Karlstad, Sweden

Take on Your Heroes #1

Everyone's first attempt at a music zine is a harrowing embarrassment—even for Mom's. This maiden flight dodges the pitfall by interviewing Kurt Davis, Eddie Flowers, and DeSoto Records—all whom graciously entertain cringe-worthy questions with in-depth and interesting answers. With some more finesse and bulk, this is top-notch coverage. (VC)

Free, PO Box 98395, Atlanta, GA 30359

Untitled #4

Sketchbook art zines only work if your shit is interesting enough to sustain our collective ADD. *Untitled* works with its hodgepodge of line drawings featuring blockheads with boners, axe-wielding toddler in a bunny/mermaid costume and other esoteric studies of a mind in the fourth dimension. Fun for whole family. (AA)

No price given, Maximus T. Kim, PO Box 91142, City of Industry, CA 91715-1142, maximus@ecologyfund.net

* Vinyl A Go Go #2

Lester Bangs' mug adorns the cover of this zine, and it's hardly a surprise. *Vinyl A Go Go* features a handful of long-form music reviews that do as much to showcase the author's sugar-shocked, self-absorbed self-deprecating nature as they do for the records themselves. That's not to say that *Vinyl A Go Go* is all a gonzo-rock retreat. Lew's articles are each packed with a sense of humor that is all his own, and his bubbling passion for the music he reviews is unparalleled. Lew also recruits a few other suburban commandos whose columns share his caffeine-addled energy and are as obsessed with girls and power pop as he is. Rounded out with an interview with The Riff Randells, *Vinyl A Go Go* is a near perfect example as to what a fanzine should be. (PS)

\$1, c/o Lew Houston, 100 W. High Street, Apt. 1A, Tipton, PA 19562, www.vinylagogo.com

Why Not? #8

Worth seeking out just for the lone piece entitled, "The Dramatic Retelling Of An American Classic," which recounts the scene where one Pee Wee Herman dances on the bar of a Satan's Helper's dive. Pure poetry. The rest of it is average perzine essays. (AA)

\$1 or trade, Jem Gardner, PO Box 1234, Berkeley, CA 94701, jemuelthepoet@hotmail.com

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books

EDITED BY Joel Schalit

Zacarias, My Brother: The Making of a Terrorist

by Abd Samad Moussaoui

Seven Stories Press

Europe's rapidly growing Islamic population constitutes its largest minority population. Yet, despite the immense amount of scholarly literature documenting the experiences of European Muslims since the wars in the former Yugoslavia during the 1990s, Europe's Islamic community remains nearly invisible to most Americans. Unfortunately, when Americans do encounter European Islam in the mass media, it is usually filtered through the tainted lense of wartime reporting: Islamic terror cells getting raided in Hamburg; Muslim clerics 'teaching hatred' at mosques in London; anti-Jewish violence in France.

A thoroughly readable account of what it means to grow up Muslim in Europe today, Abd Samad Moussaoui's *Zacarias, My Brother*, goes a long way towards addressing this deficit, and then some. Written by the schoolteacher older brother of indicted 9/11 hijacking conspirator Zacarias Moussaoui, *The Making of a Terrorist* is a terrific family-memoir-cum-sociological-analysis of what led Abd's sibling Zacarias to espouse fundamentalist Islam, and ultimately, plunge himself into the arms of international Islamic terrorist organization Al-Qaeda.

First published in France, this new English-language translation from Seven Stories Press should be of particular interest to progressive American readers still naively enamored with France's ferocious and yet—as this book makes clear—hypocritical opposition to America's invasion of Iraq. A damning portrait of French racism towards its Arab population, *Zacarias, My Brother* provides a chilling portrait of contemporary Gallic provinciality, from French intolerance of interracial dating to color-coded discrimination against Muslims in the workplace.

Particularly fascinating is Abd's brief but to the point discussion of Wahabi fundamentalist political ideology and how the influence of its foremost proponent, the 20th century Egyptian theologian Sayid Qutb—whom ever Middle Eastern oriented antiwar activist ought to read—has impacted contemporary Islamic-militant thinking. Equally prescient is Abd's account of the lack of respect for liberal democracy within contemporary European Islam and how little anyone within this community questions the wisdom of its clerical leadership. —Joel Schalit

Bench Press

by Sven Lindqvist Translated by Sarah Death

Granta

When Swedish essayist Sven Lindqvist hit his mid-50s, he took up bodybuilding. Intending to simply get in better shape, he found a whole new philosophical outlook at the gym. In 1989, his experiences with lifting and the people devoted to it culminated in *Bench Press*, a tiny (120 pages) bundle of reflections on lifting, historical information about lifting, and even the crazy dreams Lindqvist started having upon becoming a lifter. 14 years later, Lindqvist's book has finally been translated to English.

Lindqvist's physical and literary explorations begin when he strikes up conversation with a burly man he meets in the sauna. This "skinhead"—as Lindqvist continually refers to him—turns out to be a formidable thinker, and the two men proceed to have a lively debate. Lindqvist is against weightlifting because he believes it discourages people from accepting their bodies. The Skinhead counters, brilliantly, with a comparison between lifting and writing. "Why should we think of a text as a first draft, but not a body?" he asks. "Why are high standards of strength and beauty good when they're applied to a text, but bad when they're applied to a body?" After that discussion, Lindqvist becomes enraptured in the sport.

The most fascinating sections in *Bench Press* involve bodybuilding competitions, a topic that provides a natural segue into now-Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger, described in *Bench Press* as the most "extreme example" of "aggressive individualism."

They're more than a decade old, but Lindqvist's insights into Schwarzenegger have more gravity today than ever before. With all the hype and gossip surrounding Schwarzenegger's rise through politics, few have bothered to ask *why*. Why does one of the richest, most popular men in the country desire even more exposure? Lindqvist's wry observations paint a surprisingly contemporary picture of an obsessively ambitious and self-involved man that is tough to disregard.

For Lindqvist, weightlifting becomes the antithesis to the stereotypes he once had of it. Not a pointless, purely physical pursuit at all, it takes him on an intensely cerebral journey, redefining his muscles while redefining his perspective.

—Justin Westcoat Sanders

Brief Intervals of Horrible Sanity: One Season in a Progressive School

By Elizabeth Gold

Jeremy P. Tarcher Press

Few things are more painful than watching a substitute teacher struggling to get through the roll call, shouting students' names in a storm of chatter, giggles, and flying paper.

When Elizabeth Gold took over the spring semester ninth grade english reigns at the School of the New Millennium (an obvious pseudonym) in Queens, NY, she became essentially a substitute at an under-funded, severely troubled ghetto youth institution for four months. She writes about her experiences in *Brief Intervals of Horrible Sanity*, a memoir that may be the most unsympathetic portrayal of a public school experience ever to hit bookstores.

In the "February" section of *Brief Intervals*, Gold writes: "This is Hell. I never believed it before, but now the evidence is in. The screaming. The hitting. The grunting... And the hooting, don't forget the hooting." Her 15-year-old students are relentless, but with three and a half months (and about 300 pages) still to go, the reader has hope that things will turn around, and that that Gold will inspire her students and—backed by a majestic Hollywood soundtrack—lead them down the Path of Enlightenment.

Alas, *Brief Intervals* is no *Dangerous Minds*. There is no rousing Coolio soundtrack at the School of the New Millennium (an obvious pseudonym), and Gold is no Michelle Pfeiffer. A struggling poet for much of her life, Gold had little to no prior experience working with teenagers before taking the job. Within weeks she is cowering behind her desk, or bawling in the hallway, or cursing at her students in frustration.

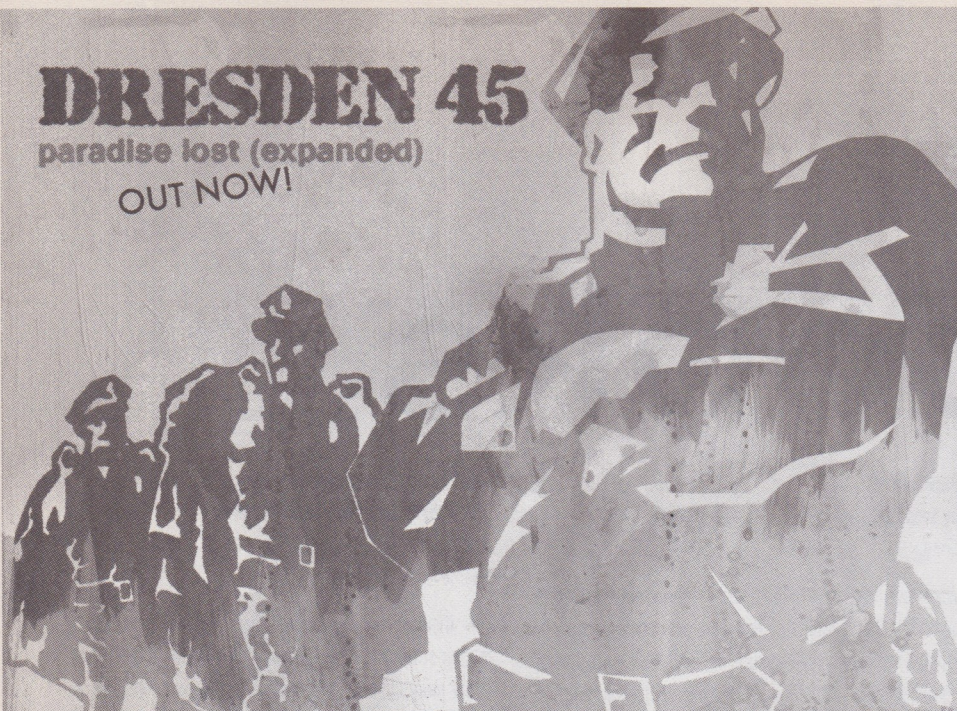
In the final sections of *Brief Moments*, Gold starts waxing philosophic on public schools in general. "If you think there is a big divide between how our richest and poorest children are educated, don't blame the schools. Blame the divide." Such vague, trite aphorisms read like political soundbites and starkly contrast the fiercely focused accounts of personal experience that preceded them.

For most of her book, Gold leads us through ugly situations with refreshing honesty. Her unabashed failure is not admirable, but then we don't admire a train when it jumps the tracks either. The ensuing crash is hopelessly fascinating regardless. —Justin Westcoat Sanders

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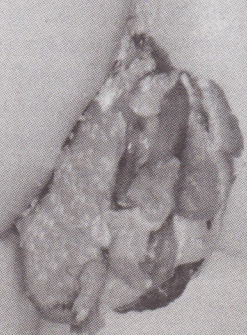
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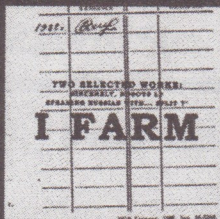


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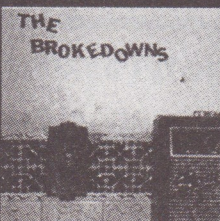
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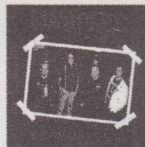
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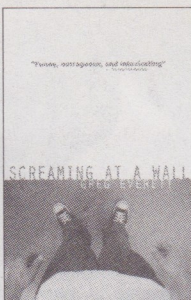
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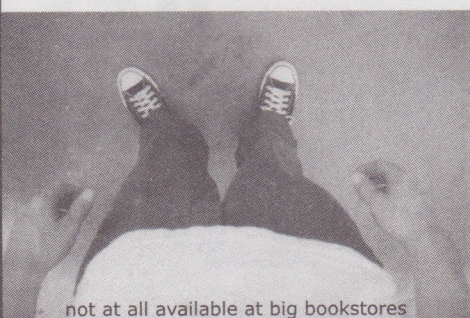
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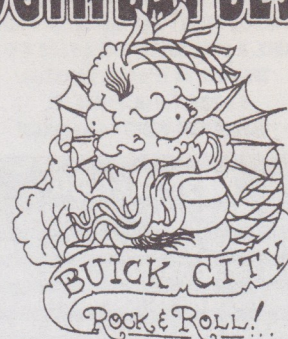
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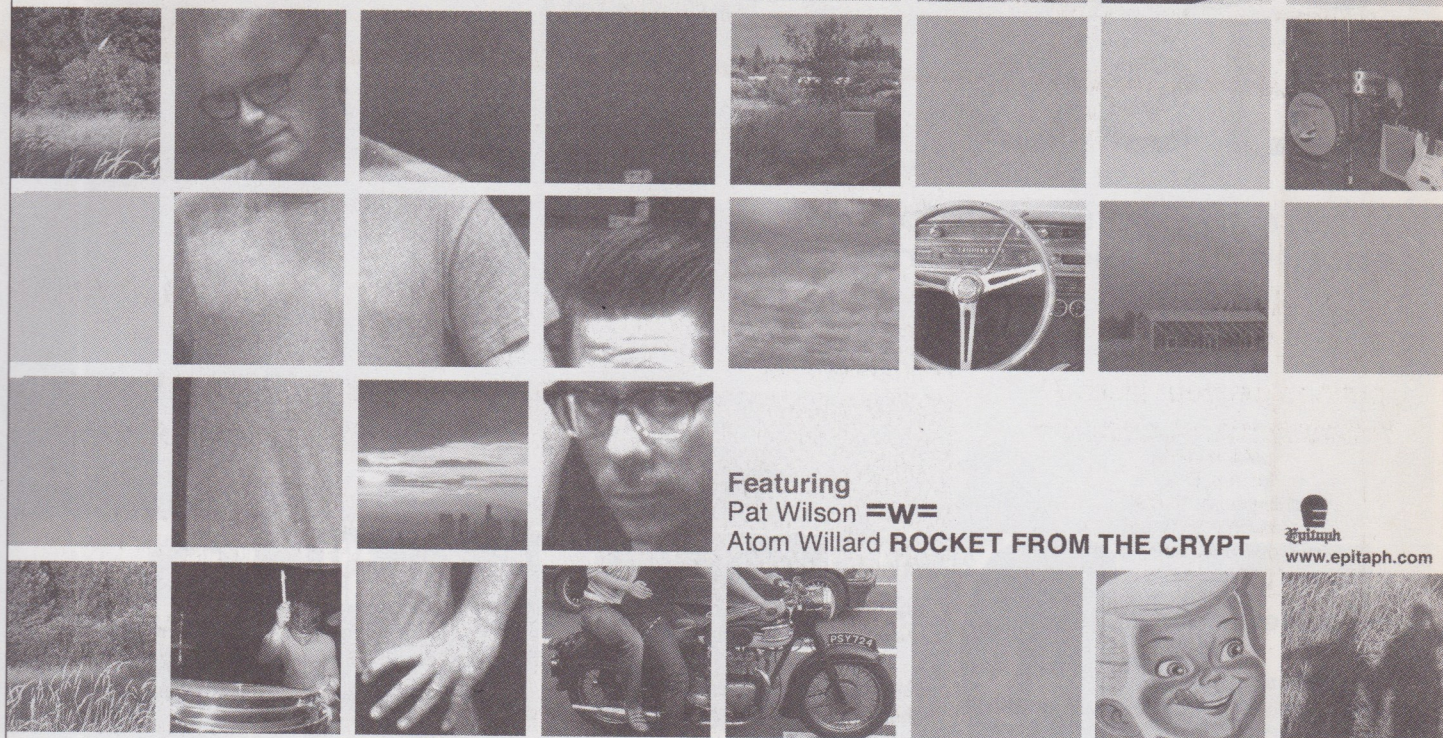
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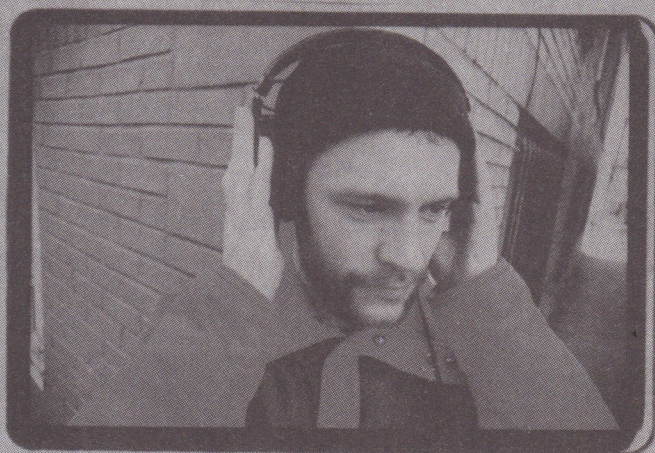
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Sounding Beijing 2003

The official site for the Sounding festival as well as much of the experimental sounds coming out of China right now is:
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Check out onlinedrawing's odd, but interesting, website: www.onlinedrawing.com

Craig Thompson

Check out work, bio and other intriguing information about Craig Thompson at his website: www.dootdootgarden.com

Blankets was published by Top Shelf Comix:
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These Arms are Snakes

Check out the minimalist website of TAAS at:
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Or go to their label's site: www.jadetree.com

articles in this issue

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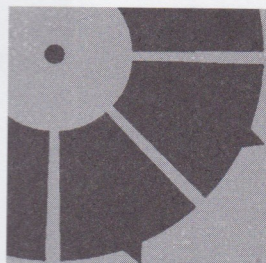
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The Final Countdown

All information from the Final Countdown section appears at the end of each piece in the section. Be sure to register to vote!

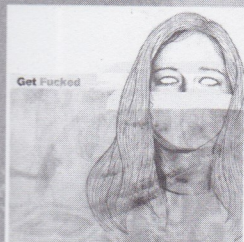


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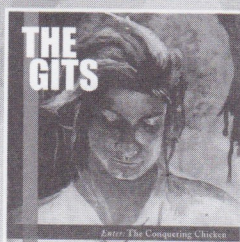
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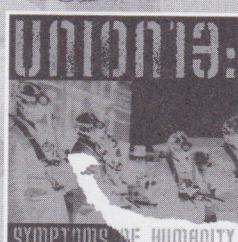
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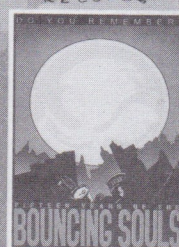
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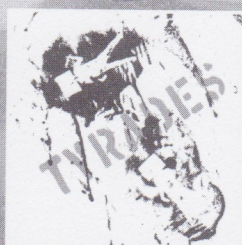


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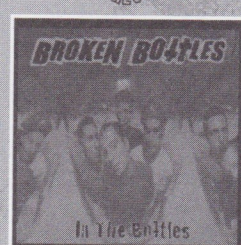


TYRADES
"TYRADES"
Like a rabid bat flying out of a time machine from 1978's San Francisco punk gutters. They've been destroying themselves and are destroying the boundaries of what's punk.

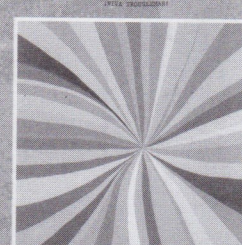
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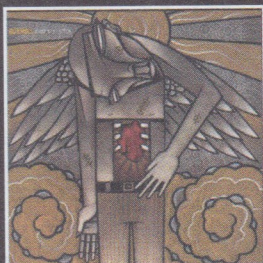


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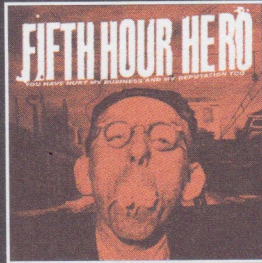
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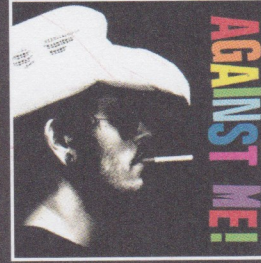
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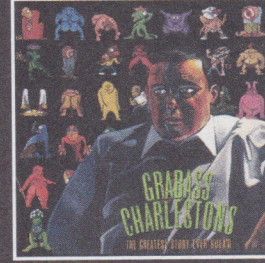
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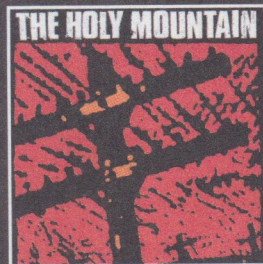
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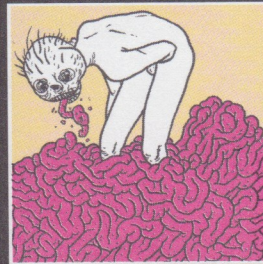
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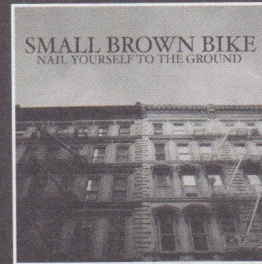
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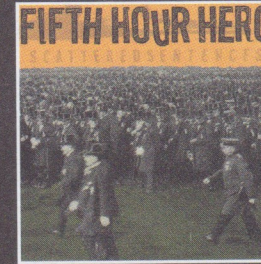
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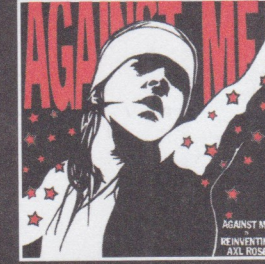
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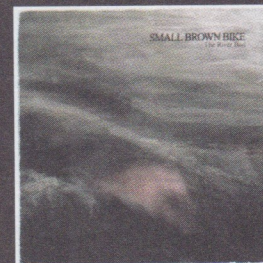
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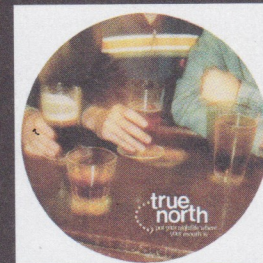
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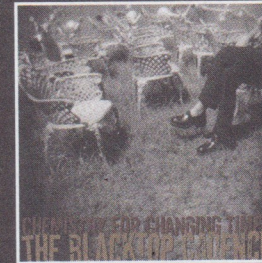
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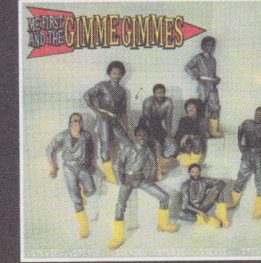
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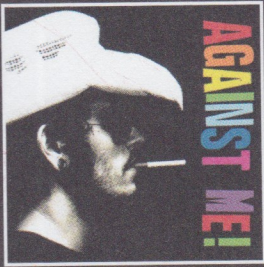
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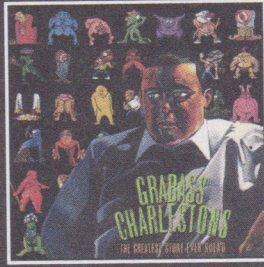
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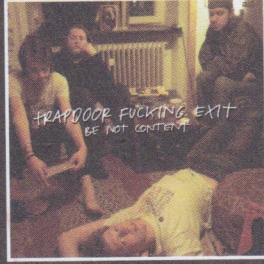
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"The Greatest Story
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D RINGS
7"



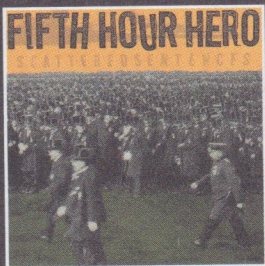
COLBOM
"Famous Last Words"
7"



**TRAPDOOR
FUCKING EXIT**
"Be Not Content" LP/CD



DOWN BIKE
self to the
12"/CD



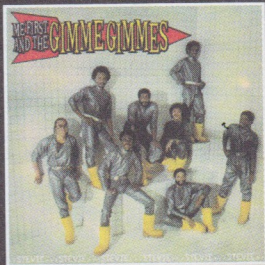
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"Stevie" 7"



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Movement" 7"/CDep

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"We've got to get strategic. We've got to get smart. But I think most of all we've got to invest in each other." —student activist Jackie Bray

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